



Inside: Your 48-page
guide to life after A-levels

THE INDEPENDENT

3,065

THURSDAY 15 AUGUST 1996

WEATHER: Cloudy and cool.

48p (B457)

On your marks: record grades trigger the race for places

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Universities were last night snapping up students after a record A-level pass-rate.

They had confirmed offers for more than 150,000 of the 290,000 available places, significantly more than at the same time last year.

This means that there may be fewer places in clearing than last year because more students will have made the grade. The A-level pass-rate is up by 1.8 percentage points, one of the biggest increases in the last seven years.

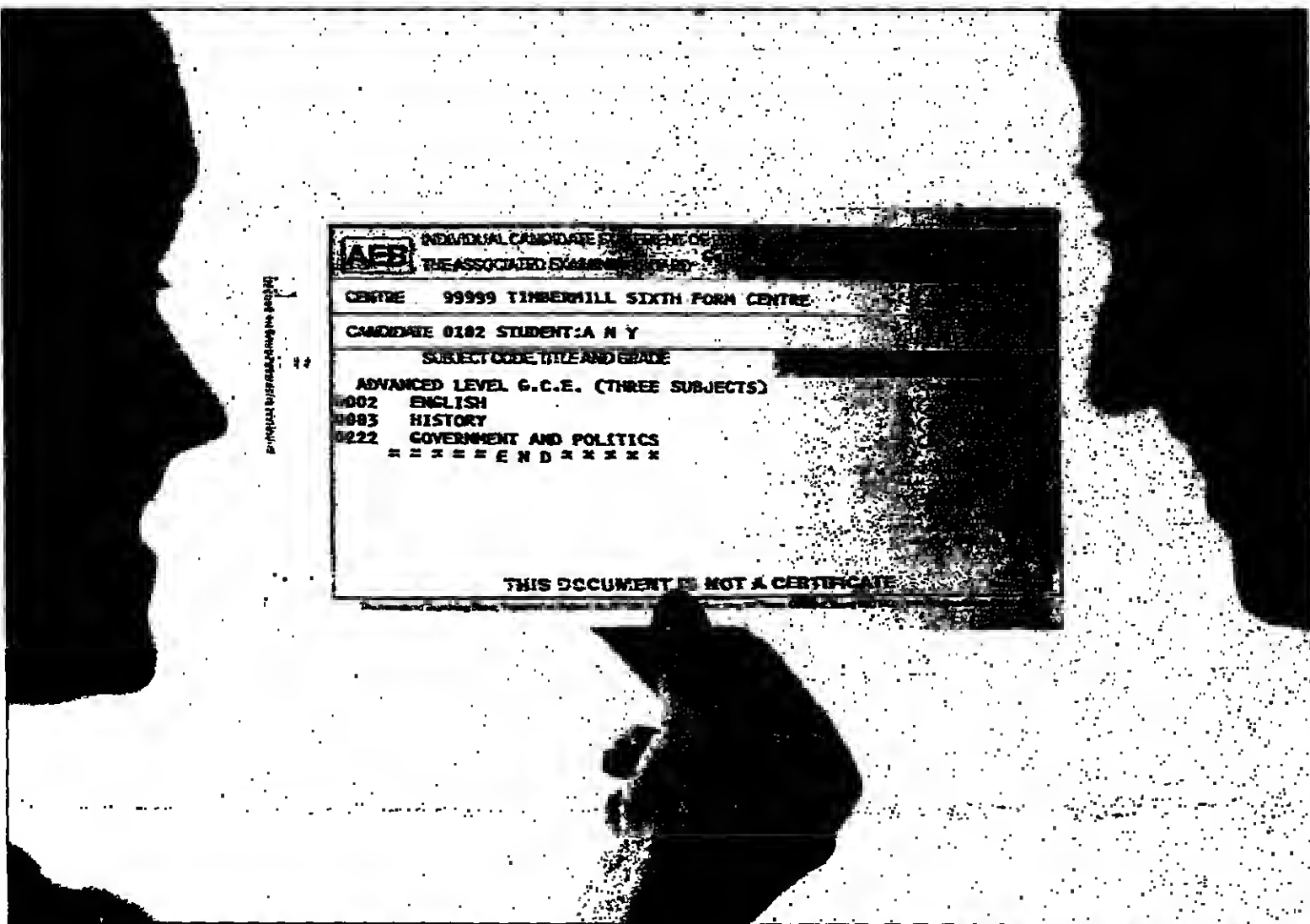
But university admissions officers said students should not panic. Tony Higgins, chief executive of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, said: "If we go on at this rate, there will be fewer places in clearing, but that doesn't mean there will be greater pressure because there will be fewer people chasing them."

Candidates who have just missed their offers may have a better than usual chance of gaining places. Courses which might have gone into clearing, through which spare places are allocated to students who have not got into university, will have fewer places to fill and may decide instead to recruit the next few students down their list.

Universities said there was no danger that the improved pass-rate would mean they overshot their targets. A spokesman for the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals said: "If you recruit too many people in English, you can always tell the engineers to take fewer."

However, that meant there might be fewer places in clearing on the less popular courses, he added.

Universities are under more pressure than usual to recruit students because of government cuts in higher education funding. They stand to lose



Don't panic: Candidates who have just missed the grades asked for by university may have a better chance of gaining a place. Photograph: Philip Meech

money if they do not meet their targets.

The annual row over standards erupted yesterday, fuelled by the traditionalists' conviction that the modular exams are easier to pass than those which depend on a final exam.

The pass-rate for modular ex-

ams, a series of tests throughout the course with an exam at the end, was higher than for the traditional exams, though a higher proportion of candidates were awarded A grades in the latter.

However, exam boards emphasised that modular courses motivated students and that

both types of exam were marked according to the same standard. Kathleen Tattersall, convener of the joint forum for the GCE and GCSE exams, said: "Modular schemes have enabled candidates to exercise choice and to optimise their attainment but it is the quality of work alone which determines

the grade." Lord Hensley, the schools minister, defended the exam and congratulated candidates on their hard work. "We're not complacent about standards and are determined that public examinations earn and retain their national currency. We must not fall into the trap of

thinking that if results improve, standards must be at risk." Bryan Davies, a Labour education spokesman, said that "a proper concern for standards should take nothing away from the achievements of students on this important day."

He called for an inquiry into whether we needed five exam

boards and the Liberal Democrats said there should be one united board.

Sir Rhodes Boyson, former Conservative education minister, said the figures showing an improved pass-rate were meaningless. Modular exams, he said, were "like a Census race, you start when you like, you stop when you like and everyone gets prizes."

On the improvement in standards, he said: "I am not knocking the children. They do work harder but if the figures are to be believed, the brains of our people are increasing at such an amazing rate that we should be able to invade outer space."

He proposed a new scholarship exam for the top 12 universities, with everyone else taking another exam.

The Association of University Teachers believes that A-levels fail to prepare students for university courses. "Strong anecdotal evidence indicates an increasing mismatch between what A-level students achieve and what is needed for university courses."

But David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said allegations that standards were falling were poppycock.

"Faced with clear evidence of a rise in attainment levels, the prospects of doom have attempted to attack modular examinations as 'proof' of a decline in standards. But there is no such evidence."

Steve Sinnott, deputy general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said: "Students and teachers would appreciate at least one year when their efforts were not undermined by a small, politically motivated group degrading their achievements. It is time that this nasty little group stopped and allowed our young people to enjoy their success."

Results tables, page 2
Leading article, page 13

Clearing lists start Monday

The Independent and the Independent on Sunday will again this year be the ONLY papers to run all the official Ucas lists of university and college vacancies.

If you have just received your results, and you're looking for a place, then you will need The Independent next Monday (19 August), when the first lists will be published.

As the clearing process continues Ucas will update their vacancies with the latest information they receive from university and college admissions officers. We will publish the updated lists three times a week, through to mid-September - giving you the best possible guide through clearing.

The lists will appear on:
Monday 19 August
Wednesday 21 August
Sunday 25 August
Tuesday 27 August
Thursday 29 August
Sunday 1 September
Wednesday 4 September
Sunday 8 September
Wednesday 11 September

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Turks shoot Cypriot marcher

TONY BARBER
Europe Editor

Security forces in Turkish-occupied northern Cyprus shot dead a Greek-Cypriot demonstrator and wounded two British peace-keepers yesterday in one of the worst days of violence since the 1974 Turkish invasion. Costas Simitis, Greece's Prime Minister, denounced the killing as "a criminal act by the occupying forces of Cyprus".

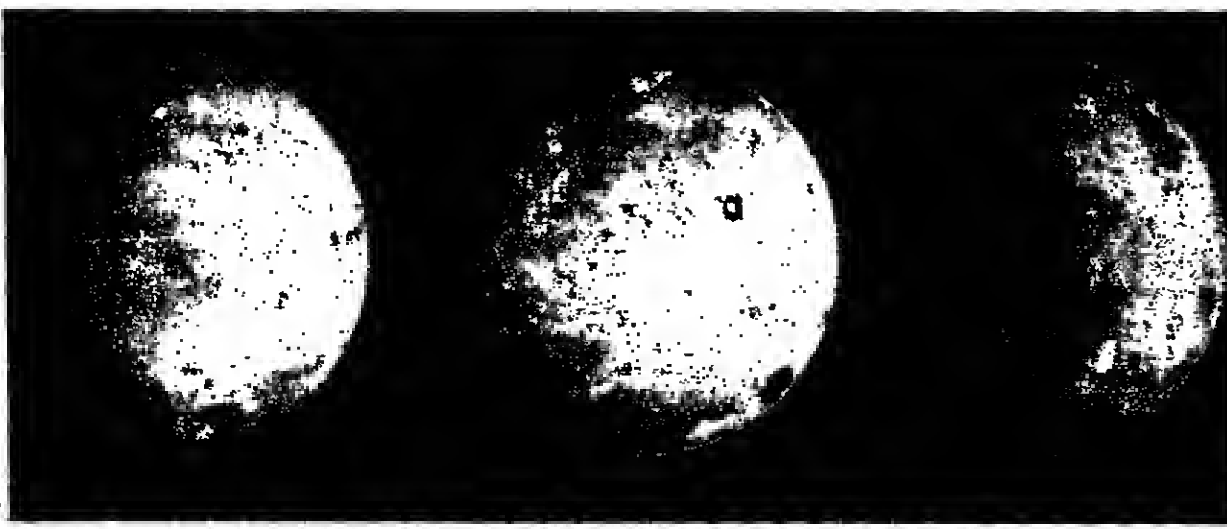
The soldiers, serving with the 39th Regiment Royal Artillery as part of a United Nations force, were said not to be in serious condition.

The violence began when 250 Greek Cypriots stormed into the UN-patrolled zone dividing the Turkish-controlled northern one-third of Cyprus from the Greek-Cypriot south. The demonstrators had attended the nearby funeral in eastern Cyprus of Tasos Isaac, 24, a Greek Cypriot clubbed to death in the buffer zone on Sunday by men in civilian clothes from the Turkish side.

The man killed yesterday was Solomon Solomos, 26, a cousin of Isaac. He was shot in the neck as he tried to haul down a Turkish-Cypriot flag from a sentry post on the edge of the Turkish-Cypriot lines.

The rise in tension has set back efforts to make a fresh start at solving the Cyprus problem. The island has been divided since the Turkish army launched an invasion in July 1974 in response to a Greek-sponsored coup in Nicosia by supporters of Cyprus's union with Greece.

Scientists divine water by the light of a Jupiter moon



Heavenly sphere: Volcanic eruptions show up on the surface of one of Jupiter's moons. Picture sequence: Galileo/Nasa

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Editor

Might there be life in yet another part of the solar system? After last week's suggestion that water on Mars could once have played host to early life forms, scientists were yesterday absorbing the news that the frozen crust of Europa - a moon of the planet Jupiter - may hide icy slush or even water, the fundamental ingredient of life.

New images taken by the Galileo spacecraft just 96,000 miles away from Europa show dark spots on its surface which could have been created by geysers.

"It's really exciting," said Ronald Greeley, a geology professor at the Arizona State University. "We're seeing evidence of a lot of geological activity." He described the

surface as resembling "ice floes on polar seas on Earth". Galileo also sent back pictures of a volcano on another of Jupiter's moons, Io, spewing a glowing blue plume of sulphur dioxide 60 miles into space - far further than any Earth volcano.

This also offers evidence that the moons of Jupiter could be geologically active enough to create the conditions in which life could arise.

The presence of slush on Europa - where the surface temperature is estimated to be -145C - would add weight to the argument that the satellite, which is about the same size as the Earth's moon, is not frozen solid, but has water under an icy layer only a few miles thick.

Despite being five times further from the Sun than the Earth, it could have been

warmed by tidal forces that are created as it orbits Jupiter, the largest planet orbiting the Sun.

The more geologically active Europa turns out to be, the more likely it is to have environmental niches that could harbour life, said Prof Greeley.

Scientists hope that better pictures will emerge after December, when Galileo will pass within 370 miles of Europa's surface.

Daniel Goldin, head of the US space agency Nasa, called the images "exciting and compelling" but said he greeted the idea of life on the icy moon with "sceptical optimism".

"We're not going to jump the gun," he said. "These pictures do not prove the existence of liquid water on Europa." But he said "the potential is

an intriguing possibility, and another step in our quest to explore the solar system, the stars, and the answer to the great mystery of whether life exists anywhere else in the cosmos."

The volcanic activity on Io is very different from that on Earth, said Dr Torrence Johnson of Nasa.

"Terrestrial eruptions cannot throw materials to such high altitudes. We believe that on Io we are seeing geyser-like eruptions that are driven by sulphur dioxide or sulphur gas that erupts and freezes in Io's extremely tenuous atmosphere," he said.



QUICKLY

Little wonder
A senior psychologist claims today's children are more likely to spend their early years glued to computer games than roaming around outdoors with friends, and are being robbed of a "sense of wonder". Page 3

Vicar remembered
Schoolchildren laid flowers and pictures at the spot where the Rev Christopher Gray, 32, was stabbed to death beside his church in Liverpool, while his parents remembered their son's courageous disregard for the risks facing clergy. Page 4

Gunman gets life
The law on firearms was again shown to be fatally flawed when a man without a gun licence who was able to buy two pistols which he used to murder one woman and shoot three others, was given four life sentences at the Old Bailey. Page 5

Life trader fined
A top trader on the London International Financial Futures Exchange has been fined for using "foul, abusive and embarrassing" language against a member of staff. He was previously fined for the racial abuse of a black trader. Page 16

TWA crash theory
US investigators believe two separate explosions doomed TWA Flight 800 on 17 July, killing all 230 passengers and are searching for a "fingerprint" to determine whether the first blast was caused by a bomb in the passenger cabin. Page 11

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Bridget Jones
Sorry, Bridget Jones' column did not appear yesterday. It will next week. Honesht.

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

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news

Murdered cleric: Shock caused by killing of a priest outside his church underlines the physical danger facing inner-city clergy



Sacrificed life: Parents of Rev Christopher Gray recalling the immense courage of their son (right) who was stabbed to death Photograph: AP

Courage of the vicar who could never say no

REBECCA FOWLER

As tearful schoolchildren laid flowers and pictures at the spot where the Rev Christopher Gray, 32, was brutally stabbed to death, beside his modern brick church in Liverpool, his parents yesterday recalled their son's courageous disregard for the growing risks facing clergy in Britain.

Dr Philip Gray, 63, a retired GP from Portsmouth, described how his son, a brilliant scholar with a great future in the Church, had no other ambition than to work among the most socially deprived.

He said: "It was a measure of his character that he chose to shelter us from full knowledge of the risks he was taking ... there was nothing we could do to lessen it any way. He'd chosen to accept those risks and we had to accept his decision."

Mr Gray, who was ordained in Liverpool three years ago, was stabbed through the heart early on Tuesday outside his home when he returned to St Margaret's vicarage in Anfield shortly after midnight.

The police are holding Terence Storey, aged 31. Mr Gray had been helping him since he was recently released from Walsby Prison.

For the Church of England, nothing could more tragically sum up the increasing pressure on clergy than the death of Mr Gray, who was among the most promising priests of his generation. He was a "rising star" who combined scholarship with a simple love of people.

Dr Gray said: "He was different things to different people. To the parishioners and friends of St Margaret's he was a well loved priest ... to the

Marian Blackburn, 15, who went on a youth trip to the Czech republic with Mr Gray last year, said: "He wanted the best for everybody, he loved everybody. You could tell, just from the way he talked to people, even if he didn't know them at all. We just couldn't believe what's happened."

Mr Gray's death has also been received with shock by the clergy. Many sense they have become more vulnerable in recent years, while struggling to maintain an open-door policy to those in need. Yet many priests, like Mr Gray, remain determined to work among the most socially deprived and challenged communities.

The Rev David Gavin, 33, moved to St Cleopas Church, in Toxteth, a year ago, with his wife and son. He said: "I'm really enjoying life here. The amount of life you get out of it makes it very interesting. Like Chris, I came from a fairly well-off background and maybe that draws you into the inner cities."

But he added: "Although I hope this case is an horrendous one-off, it is true that there's been an increase in violence, and that there's a sense clergy are no longer people you'd ever have a go at."

Mr Gavin's family has felt vulnerable on occasions, and his wife has become reluctant to invite visitors in to wait for her husband in the evenings when he is out at home.

Mr Gavin said: "There's been a change in the way clergy are trained. We're taught to be a bit more aware of potential problems - drugs, and people making accusations against you."

"But you're in a job where, ultimately, you are trying to meet people's needs. Sometimes you have to bend the rules, and that will always make you vulnerable."

The Rev David Lewis, 48, dean of North Liverpool, where Mr Gray was a priest, described how he experienced violence spilling over into clerical life.

He said: "Society has changed and things we would once have done without thinking about them, we are now more conscious of. We are making judgments all the time as to whether it's safe to open the door to someone late at night."

Mr Lewis was threatened once by a man in his study demanding money for a train fare to Scotland. Another visitor leaned on his doorknob for an hour, demanding money.

He said: "At the end of the day it's about your own survival and I suppose the remarkable thing about Chris is that for him, at the end, it wasn't."

Obituary, page 12

The Christian soldier confronts a violent world

Andrew Brown
on the clergy's stance in the face of rising attacks

The clergy of the Church of England have traditionally relied on courage and innocence to protect them against the dangerous world in which they work. But now they are asking if a new professionalism is in order in the wake of murder of the Rev Chris Gray and the hatchet attack in Walsall on the Rev Nduna Mpumzi. He is to have brain surgery.

The diocese of Lichfield, in which Mr Mpumzi serves, has organised a one-day conference on clergy safety in November. But a spokesman said that this was not prompted by any general anxiety: it followed on from conferences about church security. Theft costs the Church of England around £26m a year. The diocese of Lichfield, which recorded 19 incidents of theft or vandalism in 1980, now has more than 300 a year.

Many churches, even in rural areas, are now closed except for services. "I have just opened my church after 16 years in which it was locked except at services," a vicar in London said. "We can only do this because we have a rota of volunteers from the parish watching for theft or arson. But their average age is 70, so I do worry. After these attacks, I am not sure it is safe for them."

The diocese of London earlier this year advised priests to consider abandoning their traditional policy of welcoming almost everyone who comes to their door. Yet this will not stop

the wretched and homeless coming. They know, as the priests do, that a professional Christian cannot easily turn away someone whom the rest of the world has rejected.

The Rev Rob Marshall, priest in charge of St Augustine's, Queensgate, west London, said that last week he was woken twice after midnight by homeless men wanting shelter in the vicarage, one just out of a mental hospital. Both he refused, partly because he was worried for his children, asleep in the vicarage.

The Rev Adrian Beojamin, rector of All Saints in Friern Barnet, north London, said: "I don't know what you do with somebody at midnight in your vicarage. In this job you do keep odd hours and meet all sorts of people. They do get very cross when you turn them away. You say, 'I'm sorry, no money' and they go back up the drive hurling abuse - but not knives."

Fr Beojamin, like most of the priests the *Independent* talked to, made the point that the clergy are often the only middle-class people living in areas of considerable deprivation, which can make them the focus of considerable hostility.

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MR2

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news

Porkers in the shower bring home the bacon

CHARLIE BAIN

The perfect present is here for the pig who has everything: the snout-operated en-suite shower. The Pig Cooler is being offered to British farmers to keep hot and bothered pigs in the pink. Warm weather is anathema to pigs. It reduces the sperm count in boars, causes stress to sows and makes all pigs feel unlike pigging out. Keeping our porcine friends cool is essential for farmers; it not only makes for a better-tasting kind of pig, but a nicer tasting one too.

The Pig Cooler is a stainless steel box containing a sprinkler attached to the sty wall. All the pig has to do is nudge it with its snout and a cool jet of water drenches it.

"Pigs are very similar to humans in that during the hot summer months they lose their appetite and become bad-tempered in the heat," said Mr Mark Harding, who has spent over a year developing the new Pig Cooler. "This is made worse by the

fact that pigs can't sweat and have to rely on respiration and evaporation to lose heat.

"An unhappy pig, which won't breed or eat the optimum amount of food that is required for it to grow, can be a major financial setback for the farmer."

Research carried out by manufacturers Quality Equipment showed that less than 15 per cent of pig farmers have a dedicated water-cooling system, and those who do rely on a "centralised" pipe-work system that creates a mist of water, often increasing humidity levels in indoor pens.

"Many existing systems operate on a timer, spraying the pig in water when they may not want to cool down, which can irritate them further," said Mr Harding. "However, this device gives the pig control over their own environment."

Suffolk farmer Philip Greenacre, for one, is delighted. "After all, a happy pig at the end of the day is going to make me more money."



And pigs might dry: One of farmer Philip Greenacre's lot tests out the new Pig Cooler Photograph: Jason Mitchell

Milk from cows fed on bracken 'carcinogenic'

CHARLES ARTHUR
Science Editor

Cows that eat bracken produce milk containing a potent carcinogen absorbed from the plant, according to new scientific research.

The carcinogen, ptaquiloside, would not be destroyed by pasteurisation, according to one expert. It is well known for its ability to cause tumours by damage to DNA, the basic genetic material of all cells. Now a team of scientists in New Zealand and Venezuela has discovered that almost 10 per cent of the chemical eaten by cows is passed on in milk, a fact the team calls a "cause for concern".

The team suggests that ptaquiloside in milk is "certainly likely" to be responsible for the level of stomach cancer found in farmers in Costa Rica and other Central American countries, where bracken is particularly dense.

Though cows in the UK do not normally eat bracken, they may do if there is a drought, if fields have been overgrazed, or if they wander into thickets. The National Farmers' Union said:

"Cows don't like to eat bracken, and farmers don't encourage its growth. Even in winter cows would be fed from winter stocks." But Alan Heyworth of the Bracken Advisory Commission said: "If the animals are in a field which has some fronds, it's obviously going to happen that they'll eat some."

The new research, published today in *Nature*, investigated the effects of feeding bracken to cows and discovered that ptaquiloside is still excreted in milk almost four days after feeding stops. Pasteurisation would be unlikely to affect the chemical, said Mr Heyworth: "If it survives getting through the cow's digestive system and blood, I don't think heat treatment would have any effect."

In the UK, the plant covers a total area equivalent to the size of Yorkshire. It is poisonous to animals which eat it, and its spores can be carcinogenic when fed to mice and guinea pigs. Although efforts are being made to destroy it using pesticides, European Union rules prevent spraying near water-courses - which can also be polluted by the plant.

Mail-order murderer mocks gun law

JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

The country's gun laws were again shown to be fatally flawed yesterday after it emerged that a man without a gun licence was able to buy two pistols, through a magazine, which he used to murder one woman and shoot three others.

A judge at the Old Bailey called for tighter restrictions on the sale of guns as he sentenced Richard Humphrey to four life sentences at the close of a case which has provided further ammunition for the anti-gun lobby.

Sir Lawrence Verney, the Recorder of London, described the case with which Humphrey bought the weapons from *Gun Mart* magazine as "deplorable". He called for "those that have to make decisions" to take note of how Humphrey executed a

The dealer became suspicious and tipped off the police, but when they arrived at Humphrey's address in Herne Hill, south London, they found an empty box, some of the ammunition, but no sign of the guns, or of Humphrey.

Police have since put their own advertisement in the magazine - warning dealers and enthusiasts to be on the alert.

Joanna Korner QC, prosecuting, told the jury: "This case has provided the clearest possible demonstration of the ease with which it is possible for criminals to acquire firearms certificates and, indeed, firearms."

Victoria Odusisi, 36, wife of a Nigerian airline official, was executed in cold blood by Humphrey as she returned from church. She was found by her brother, dying near her home in Stockwell, south London.

"It was a vicious and cruel killing, causing immense grief to a number of people," said the judge. He added it was fortunate that Humphrey was not facing a second murder charge after shooting down Wing Commander Peter Drissell in May last year. Humphrey and another man, Paul Ammah, had tried to mug the wing commander as he returned to his Clapham home from the Ministry of Defence. The RAF officer "miraculously survived" a hail of at least five bullets, four of which remain in his body.

Humphrey also tried to kill a passer-by, Carol Bell, who witnessed the mugging and threatened to call the police. She escaped injury. During a row with a man on the London Underground, Humphrey fired at the man's head. But Michael Perry, 23, put up his hand and the shot went into his forearm.

Humphrey earlier fired on another man whom he mugged in Stockwell. The shot was aimed at 20-year-old Mark Rogers' foot, but missed. Humphrey was also convicted of two robberies and firearms offences and was jailed for nine years on these, to run concurrently. He denied all charges.

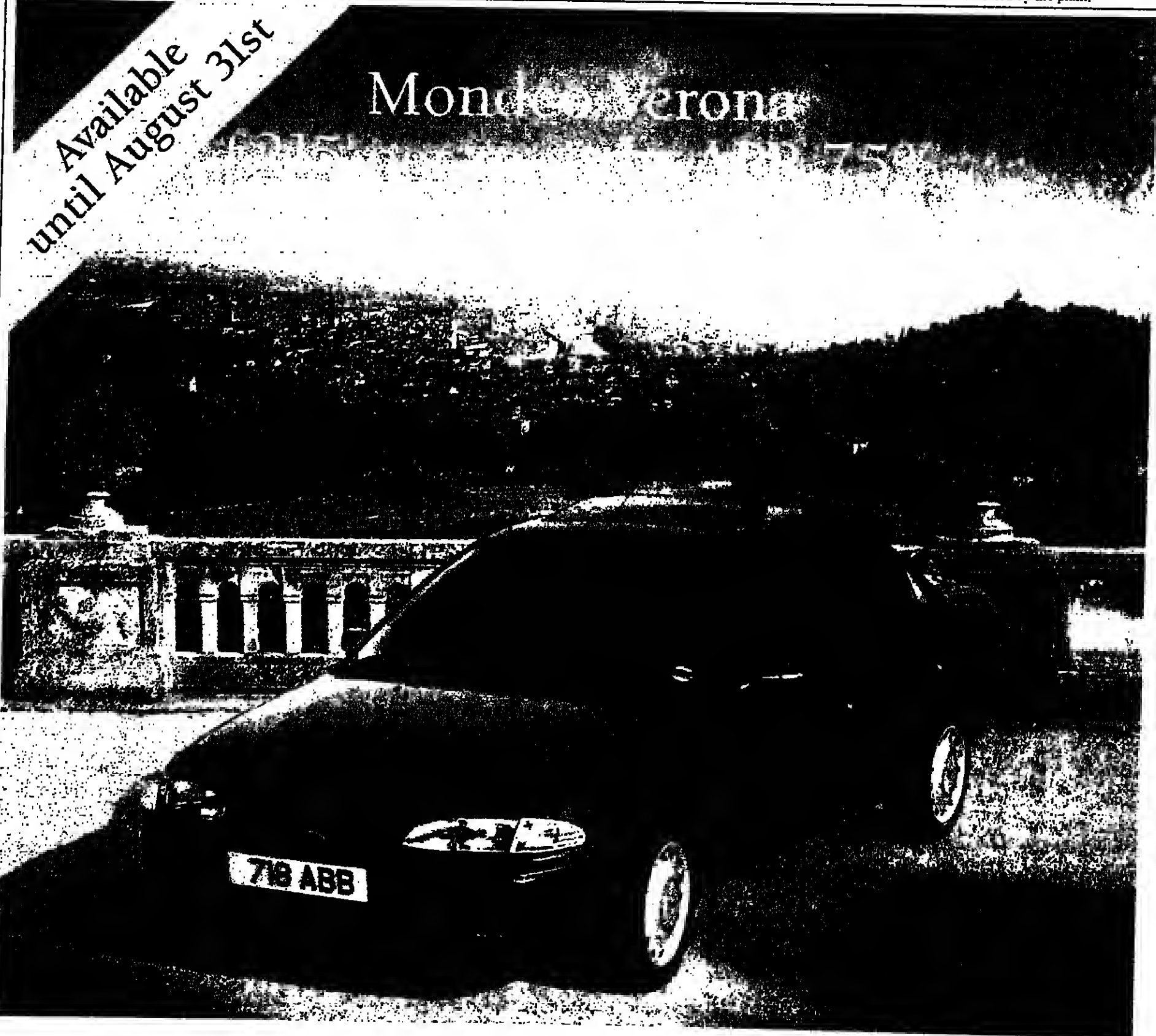
Humphrey called the jury of seven men and five women "senseless, racist bastards" after they convicted him.

As Humphrey was convicted, the Police Federation renewed its call for a ban on handguns. "This case exposes the weakness of the system," said its chairman, Fred Broughton. Instead of tinkering with the law, "a wholesale prohibition of handguns is the correct solution," he added.

Humphrey's own counsel joined the prosecution's concern over existing firearms laws. Alan Newman QC, said: "I accept he must be punished for the dreadful crimes he has committed, but he must not be made a scapegoat for the failure of society to regulate its affairs by making it much harder for people like Humphrey to obtain guns."



The ease with which Humphrey bought his guns from a magazine was 'deplorable'



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Inner-city clergy of the could no

Marian Blackburn, 15, who went on a youth trip to the Czech republic with Mr Gray last year, said: "He wanted to be a priest for everybody. You could tell he was from the way he talked to people, even if he didn't know them at all. We just couldn't believe what he was saying."

Mr Gray's death has been received with shock by the clergy. Many sense they have become more vulnerable in recent years, while struggling to maintain an open-door policy to those in need. Yet many priests, like Mr Gray, remain determined to work among the socially deprived and disadvantaged communities.

The Rev David Gavin, 42, moved to St Clement's Church, North, a year ago, with his wife and son. He said: "I'm not enjoying life here. The sense of life you get from a priest is very interesting. Like Clive, I came from a fairly well-off background and maybe it draws you into the inner city."

But he added: "Although I hope this case is an isolated one-off, it is true that there has been an increase in violence, and that there's a sense that we are no longer people who never have a gun."

Mr Gavin's family has been harassed on occasions, and he has become reluctant to invite visitors in to his home. He is not at home.

Mr Gavin said: "There's been a change in the way clergy are treated. We're taught to be more aware of potential problems - drugs, and people using accusations against us."

But you're not alone, you're ultimately, you're not alone. I meet people's needs. Sometimes you have to be a bit of a hero, and that's what you're vulnerable to."

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Christian confronts ent world

Andrew Brown on the clergy's stance in the face of rising attacks

The world has been hit by a wave of violence. The world has been hit by a wave of violence. The world has been hit by a wave of violence.

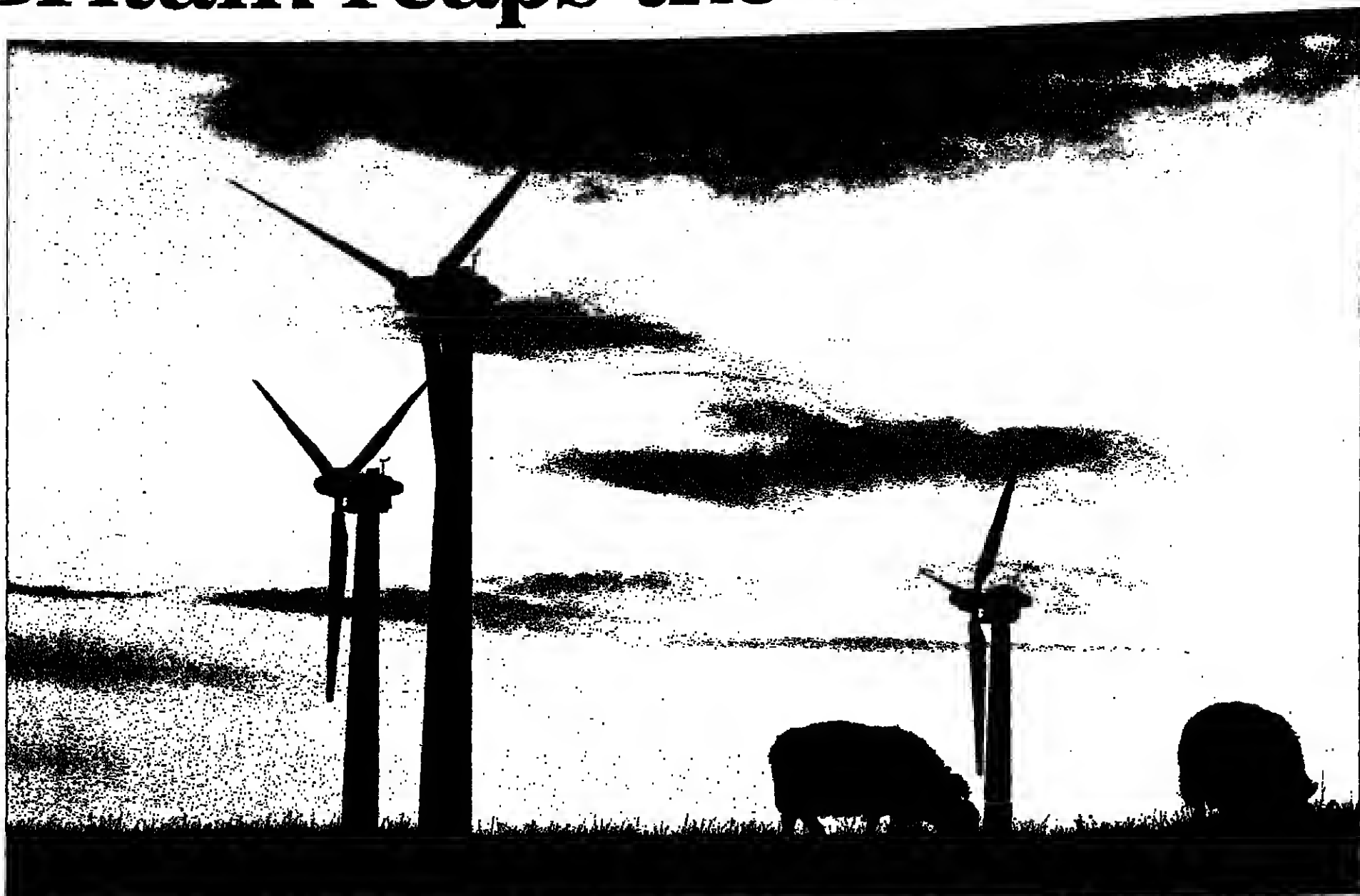
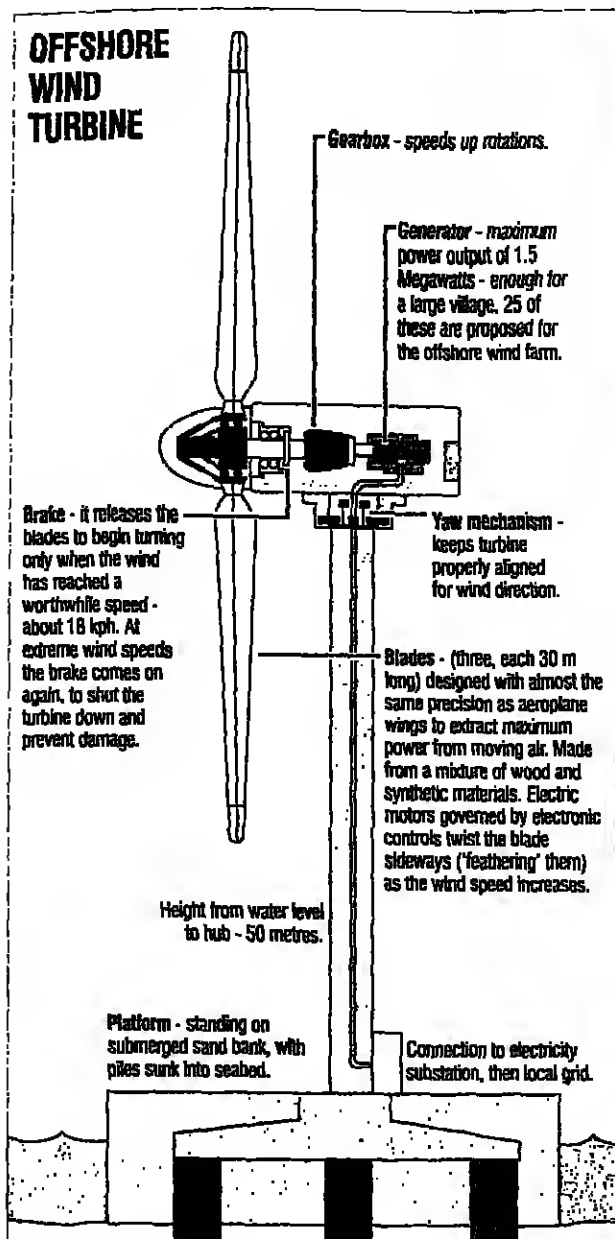
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The world has been hit by a wave of violence. The world has been hit by a wave of violence. The world has been hit by a wave of violence.

news

Breezy Britain reaps the whirlwind



Power from the wind: Turbines stand atop a hill at Llandinam, Wales. Wind farms are close to being able to compete with fossil fuel energy sources. Photograph: Steve Peake

NICHOLAS SCHOON
Environment Correspondent

First offshore wind farm set to power a town and generate environmentalists' hopes for renewable energy

PowerGen is planning to build Britain's first offshore wind farm two miles off the Norfolk coast. If the complex of 25 giant turbines goes ahead it could give wind energy development its biggest boost ever in the UK.

There are more than 30 land wind farms, thanks to both a subsidy scheme funded by electricity consumers through their bills, and to the fact that Britain is Europe's windiest large nation. The industry has always looked to moving offshore, where the winds blow stronger and steadier and the environ-

mental conflicts found inland can be minimised.

But in Great Yarmouth, from where the turbines would be visible, there was some concern at the proposal, particularly about the effect on the large numbers of seals which sometimes bask at low tide on a sandbank less than a quarter of a mile from the proposed site.

The 25 turbines would stand over 150ft tall from the tips of their topmost blade. They would be built on platforms in 13ft-deep shallows, and generate enough power for a town of 56,000 people. PowerGen,

Britain's second biggest generator, has submitted its project to the Department of Trade and Industry along with dozens of plans from other developers backing onshore wind farms. All of them are seeking the consumer subsidy used to fund renewable energy systems in Britain. PowerGen is also negotiating with the Crown Estate, which owns the seabed.

PowerGen plans to use new 1.5 megawatt turbines, two or three times the power of those being installed in onland farms. They would be made by the Danish firm Vesta, although there are

hopes that many British-made components will be used.

"This proposal is very good news," said Dr Ian Mays, President of the European Wind Energy Association and managing director of UK wind farm developer Renewable Energy Systems. "We have a huge wind resource offshore, and I'm sure the UK industry will be taking increasing advantage of the growing market here and overseas."

There are just three offshore wind farms in the world, all in Europe. Britain's first wind farm opened less than five years

ago - 10 electricity-generating windmills on a Cornish hilltop.

Wind farms in Britain generate sufficient electricity for a city the size of Bristol, but they have always been at the centre of debate. Conservationists have deplored the siting of several of them in beautiful upland areas. Some are next to national parks.

Sir Bernard Ingham, former press secretary to Margaret Thatcher, has rallied against them and is honorary president of an anti-wind farm group.

The environmentalist, Jonathan Porritt, says he finds their slim shapes and slowly turning

blades a beautiful and exciting pointer to a greener future.

Wind farms are close to being able to compete with conventional fossil fuel sources of energy. The price of wind-generated electricity has dropped steadily as the turbines have become mass-produced and reliable. The windiness of the site is all-important because the amount of power available is proportional to the wind-speed cubed.

But turbines usually have to be kept 300 metres from the nearest home because of noise. They cannot be close to trees

because these interfere with windflow. The hilltop wind farm at Penrhyneddland near Llandinam, Powys, which has 103 turbines, has plagued neighbours living some distance away with its noise.

Wind generation could supply 10 per cent of UK electricity by 2025 with little increase in power bills, but there would be have to be many hundreds of wind farms, and they would dominate much of our breezy western and upland countryside. That is why the move offshore is so significant.

The great majority of turbines installed in Britain are imported. About £60m of Government money has been sunk into wind research and development but this has not yet given Britain a strong windpower industry.

One reason is that much of this taxpayers' money was spent developing vast multi-megawatt turbines much larger than those in demand today.

bines installed in Britain are imported. About £60m of Government money has been sunk into wind research and development but this has not yet given Britain a strong windpower industry.

One reason is that much of this taxpayers' money was spent developing vast multi-megawatt turbines much larger than those in demand today.

The Danish strategy proved much more successful: the government there subsidised demand heavily during the 1980s, leaving it to the manufacturers to decide what were the most cost effective machines. Now its industry has a world lead.



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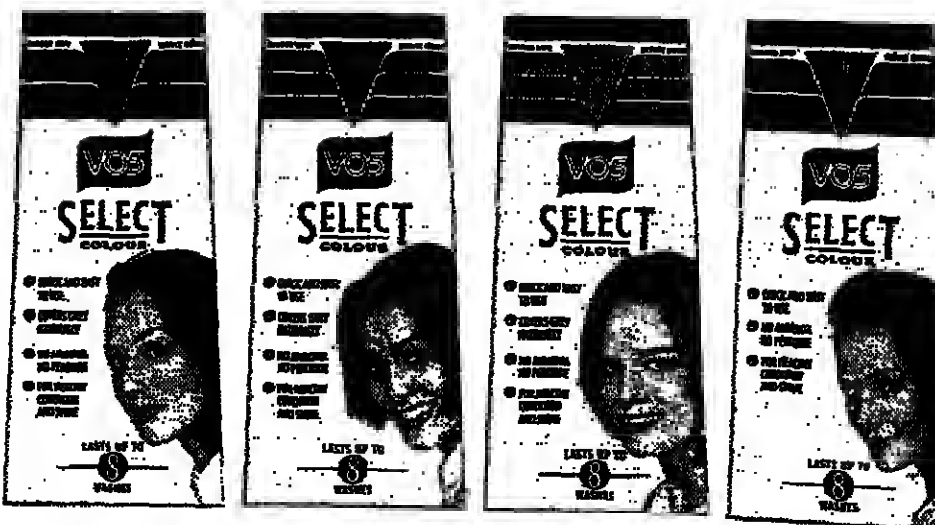
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edited by David Lister

Music industry: Euro 96 theme helps fuel surge in teenagers' favourite format

Long-dead singles rise from the groove

DAVID LISTER

The death of the single, mourned for over two decades, has been greatly exaggerated. New figures show the traditional music format for teenagers is making a comeback.

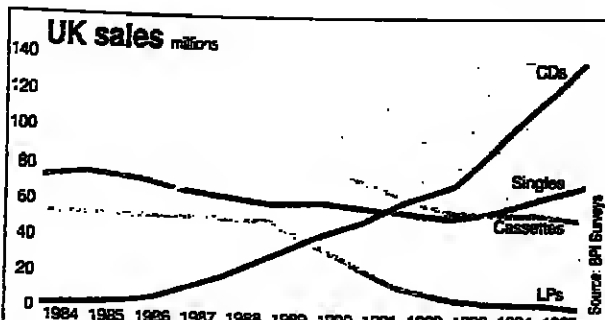
This summer has seen a surge in the sale of singles, due partly to the Euro 96 theme *Football's Coming Home*, and to the first release in five years from George Michael.

Britain now sells almost 17 per cent of the world market in singles compared to only 5.9 per cent of the album market.

According to Peter Scapling, secretary general of the British Phonographic Industry: "There are some elements about the structure of British society which make the single an immediately responsive element in recorded music entertainment."

There is also a mundane reason behind the success of the single. At £4.49 its price has not changed for five years; and this price is often halved by record shops in promotion wars.

But the resurrection of the single has been accompanied by the death throws of cassettes, which are continuing to lose ground to compact discs, following a dramatic fall last year.



The music industry is now so taken with the surge in singles that it is codeavouring to rewrite history and claim that the decline in singles' buying may have been a myth, as proper figures were never compiled in the 1960s.

The new statistical handbook from the British Phonographic Industry contains the statement: "In recent years, there have been several misinformed press stories suggesting that having a number-one single is not the achievement that it once was."

Unfortunately, there are no statistics from the 1960s available to test the theory. It is true, however, that the number of singles released now is far greater than was the case 30 years ago, so the feat of attaining the top

position could hardly be described as easy.

The latest BPI statistical handbook, out today, shows that singles sales were particularly strong in 1995 when more than 70 million units were sold for the first time in 10 years.

The album market was 196 million. Cassette albums were the only casualty. The sale of 53 million marked a drop of 2.6 million on the previous year.

But the new figures for this summer, which are not included in the handbook, show the singles market is continuing to grow. Over 18 million were bought between April and June this year, almost 6 per cent more than in the same quarter the previous year, and 4 million more than in the equivalent quarter of 1993.

Of the 18 million, 11 million were CD singles, a 7 per cent increase in this format from the previous year. About 4.5 million were cassette singles, a drop of 4.6 per cent from the previous year and 2 million were 12in-vinyl singles, a drop of 2 per cent. Only 600,000 were traditional 7in-vinyl 45s, a drop of 0.5 per cent.

The cash generated from sales of singles rose by 11 per cent compared to the summer of 1993, with customers paying £28.5m to only three months. Over the same three months, 40 million albums were sold.

The main artists behind the singles bonanza were: The Fugees, with their version of the soul classic *Killing Me Softly*; Gina G, Mark Morrison, Baddiel/Skinner/Lightning Seeds, with the Euro 96 anthem, and George Michael.

The other notable aspect of the figures released by the BPI is the way budget-price classical albums are increasing their share of the market. Last year 30.8 per cent of classical-album sales were budget price, 19.7 per cent were mid-price and 49.5 per cent were full price. In 1990 budget-price albums accounted for only 20 per cent of the market.



Top of the singles (clockwise from the top): George Michael, Gina G, Mark Morrison Skinner and Baddiel, and the Fugees were among the main artists behind the bonanza



Doomed prince: Robert Lepage Photograph: Geraint Lewis

Ghost in the machinery foils Hamlet

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Arts Correspondent

One of the most prestigious productions at this year's Edinburgh Festival has been cancelled at the last minute, leaving thousands of ticket-holders disappointed.

Yesterday Robert Lepage, the renowned actor and director, admitted that his reinterpretation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* would not see one performance.

Elinore, starring Mr Lepage himself, was to be the theatrical showpiece of the festival's first week, but the complicated technical equipment on which it relied broke down as it was due to open on Monday.

Mr Lepage said the problem had proved impossible to fix and that the show, due to run for five nights, had been cancelled.

The news will be a blow to the 3,000 people who had bought tickets costing between £6 and £20 to see what was described as "a remarkable synthesis of dazzling theatre technology and cinematic convention".

Mr Lepage explained at a press conference: "There was a huge piece of machinery that revolved and picks up huge pieces of sets. It depended on four motors to pick up the pieces, but one didn't respond."

Despite working round the

clock it proved impossible to mend, and the only available replacement part was in Canada. He was, he admitted, extremely embarrassed and conceded that such heavy reliance on technology may have been risky.

Everything had gone smoothly during rehearsals and in the six months that the show, by the Ex-Machina Company of Canada, had been touring abroad.

It is the first time in living memory that the Edinburgh Festival has lost such a high-profile show in such a way, and the cost to it is likely to be close to £100,000, but its director, Brian McMaster, said that the Festival had an insurance policy to cover such emergencies. The Bank of Scotland, which sponsored the show, had been "very supportive".

Mr McMaster said his staff would tell as many people as possible that the show would not be running. Tourist information offices in the city had been informed and credit card bookings would be automatically refunded.

The Ex-Machina Company was said to be devastated after having worked furiously to prepare the show for Edinburgh. It is due to tour Nottingham, Newcastle and Glasgow later this year and is also booked to appear at the National Theatre in London.

DAILY POEM

Straddling
By Fred Johnston

To know a settling place
a gate that rests your elbows
a view that dominates your next move
a gesture over a wall that punctuates
the given word, the agreed signature -
To have all this from birth is a sort of peace

As not having it cuts to the bone
roots to the quick the hesitancy
in the heart, as if no steering were ever
possible through the scraggled charts
you stuffed in pockets of memory, hazzarding
A guess each time, always edging, bordering

What I know is this -
our reach is never what we think it is
no wall we build is utterly unbreachable
sometimes a doubt is all that saves us
sends us running to where the fault lies
Straddling beyond our span we fall over always.

Fred Johnston, born in Belfast in 1951, is a journalist and critic for the *Irish Times*, who has published six collections of poetry. In 1972 he received a Hennessy Literary Award for Prose. *Middle*, his latest collection, is published by Salmoo next year.

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Peace in Chechnya: Rebels accuse Russians of refugee attack; Russia says rebels fired first

Grozny
ceasefire
lasts five
minutesHELEN WOMACK
Moscow

On the first day of the new ceasefire in Chechnya yesterday, rebels accused Russian helicopter pilots of firing rockets on a column of refugees, and sporadic shooting continued in the capital Grozny.

Despite the violations, however, fighting overall seemed to have been less intense than over the last eight days and in the evening, military representatives from both sides met to try and strengthen the ceasefire.

Matters had not looked hopeful in the morning when the commander of Russian forces, General Konstantin Pulikovskiy, denied that he and the rebel chief of staff, Aslan Maskhadov, had agreed a ceasefire as announced on Tuesday. All he would say was that his troops would not fire first.

The Chechens, who said the ceasefire had been agreed, accused the Russians of violating it only five minutes after it went into force at midday, with the air strike against fleeing civilians. "Today at 12.05pm, Russian aircraft launched a rocket attack against Grozny," said a rebel spokesman, Movladi Udogov, specifying the area in which it happened. "Many people have been killed."

A Reuters correspondent, Lawrence Sheets, said he saw from a distance how a helicopter fired a rocket at the time and in the area mentioned by Mr Udogov. The Russian side did not comment on the Chechen accusation but said the rebels had violated the truce by firing at its servicemen.

There was still some will to achieve a ceasefire, however. In the evening, Russian officers left their main base near Grozny to meet rebel representatives in

the village of Novye Atagi. Tass news agency said they would discuss "all questions linked with mutual obligations reached on Tuesday between Konstantin Pulikovskiy and Aslan Maskhadov on not opening fire unnecessarily".

A ceasefire was ordered by President Boris Yeltsin's new envoy to Chechnya, Alexander Lebed, who on Sunday made a lightning visit to the region and met Maskhadov. His political future now very much depends on whether the bloodshed comes to a quick end. An outsider in the Kremlin - he was appointed national security chief in June after coming third in the first round of the presidential elections - he has already made enemies for himself by criticising the government's handling of Chechnya.

On Monday, when he returned from the region, he declared that Mr Yeltsin was about to sign a decree, giving him more powers to make decisions over Chechnya and reducing the influence of the Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. RIA news agency said last night that the decree had been issued although Mr Yeltsin's press service, Izvestia, could not confirm this.

Izvestia said Mr Chernomyrdin and Mr Yeltsin's chief of administration, Anatoly Chubais, were against the decree because it would make General Lebed too powerful. "Lebed, whose talents in the military sphere are unquestioned, may be outclassed when it comes to Kremlin intrigue," it commented.

Mr Yeltsin was yesterday having routine medical checks before leaving on holiday. His new spokesman, Sergei Yastrzhembskiy, said the leader was "in good working form".



Time to run: A Chechen woman fleeing the fighting in Grozny yesterday with her baby

Photograph: Reuters

Olive branch
confuses HK
democratsSTEPHEN VINES
Hong Kong

Having been alternately ignored and vilified by China, the leaders of the Democratic Party, Hong Kong's largest political party, are in a quandary as to how to respond to the Chinese government's first indication of a willingness to establish a dialogue.

At a meeting tonight the party's leaders are likely to ratify a decision to rebuff China's offer of a chance to participate in a Peking-run body, the Selection Committee, which will choose the head of the territory's government after next year's transfer of sovereignty, and be responsible for the appointment of members to a provisional legislature which will replace the current body after it has been dissolved by the incoming sovereign power.

The Chinese government previously favoured a policy of deploying the blunderbuss in dealing with the democrats, but it now appears to have gained the upper hand by offering an olive branch.

This was presented by the Chinese Vice-Premier, Qian Qichen, who has special responsibility for Hong Kong. He said that China was willing to work with those who "hold different opinions about the course and pace of democratic development as long as they share the common ground of support for the resumption of sovereignty". This is a far cry from the usual practice of branding the democrats' leaders as "subversives" and "stooges of the British imperialists".

The democrats quickly responded by saying they "strongly welcome" Mr Qian's remarks, describing them as "a positive and constructive step". However Martin Lee, the democrats' leader, firmly ruled out participation in the Selection Committee because "it is conditional on participating in a process which will undermine democracy in Hong Kong".

Democratic Party members fear that they will lose credibility by joining a body which is playing a role in dismantling elected bodies and replacing them with unelected provisional councils. They feel that they have secured

a high degree of popular support because of an uncompromising stand of opposing China's plans for undermining democratic institutions.

This position does not appear to be well understood in Hong Kong. A recent public opinion poll showed that 60 per cent of respondents wanted the Democratic Party to join the Selection Committee.

This finding will be music to the ears of officials in Peking who may have seen their invitation as a trap to force the democrats to assume the unfamiliar role of rejecting dialogue and being unwilling to compromise.

The 400-member Selection Committee is likely to turn out to be little more than a rubber stamp for Peking's candidates. Indeed it is clear that China will



Qian Qichen: China willing to work with democrats

only tolerate the appointment of someone it likes as head of the new administration. The front runner is the shipping magnate Tung Chee-hwa who is heavily in debt to Peking for bailing out his company when it was faced with ruin.

Meanwhile Chinese leaders, including President Jiang Zemin, have started to talk about the necessity of the territory being led by people who are "acceptable" to Hong Kongers. This may appear to be a rather unremarkable point of view but it replaces the former emphasis on loyalty to China.

The Chinese government does not wish to see the Democratic Party continuing to secure majority support. A more subtle approach, confronting the democrats with difficult choices, may well yield positive results.

SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

High-ranking army officers were responsible for the 1993 murder of Burundi's first freely elected president, Melchior Ndadaye, Belgian newspaper *Le Soir* said yesterday, citing a leaked United Nations report.

The report concluded that the massacre of Tutsi civilians which followed the Hutu President's death was not spontaneous but orchestrated. Only four months after Ndadaye's landslide victory, officers of the Tutsi-dominated army staged an unsuccessful coup in which the president and prominent Hutus were killed. This set the stage for the civil strife in which tens of thousands have died. *Reuter - Brussels*

Gunmen opened fire on Sunni Muslim worshippers outside a mosque in the port city in the south of Pakistan, killing 11 people and wounding nine others. Stunned witnesses said about 200 worshippers had gathered outside the New Town mosque for an Independence Day procession when the shooting occurred. *AP - Karachi*

German prosecutors asked a court to send the US neo-Nazi leader, Gary Lauck, to jail for five years for playing a key role in smuggling extremist propaganda into Germany. Prosecutors told the court in Hamburg that Lauck, 43, deserved the maximum possible sentence because he had provided the main source of neo-Nazi propaganda in Germany in the last 20 years. *Reuter - Hamburg*

Japan apologised for the first time to Second World War Filipino women sex slaves and a private fund pledged \$18,500 (£12,000) for each to atone for a black chapter in Japanese history. Four Filipinas who were kept in Japanese military brothels received a letter of "sincere apologies and remorse" from the Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto. "This is the happiest of moments of my life," said Maria Rosa Henson, 68, after receiving the letter. *Reuter - Manila*

The Turkish navy flagship was towed back to its port with Greek assistance yesterday after running aground in Greek waters. Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos said. A Greek navy statement said the frigate *Yavuz* ran aground in the straits between the south-eastern Greek island of Kos and the Turkish coast during a non-aggressive passage through Greek waters on Tuesday. *Reuter - Athens*

Indonesian authorities arrested 28 people, accusing them of belonging to a banned left-wing group blamed for anti-government rioting last month. The arrests were made on Sunday in the island of Bali, where the suspects are alleged to have fled after rioting in Jakarta on 27 July. *Antara news agency said. AP - Jakarta*

Thousands of dead rats have been found floating in a river in India's north-eastern state of Assam and scared people have stopped fishing and drawing water from it. The United News of India (UNI) news agency said locals interpreted the death of the rats as an ominous sign. *Reuter - Gauhati, India*

Vienna Philharmonic, one of Austria's last male strongholds, will admit women because there are not enough qualified men to keep the orchestra going, its director said. Werner Resel noted 65 per cent of music school students were female. "This fact alone will make it necessary to accept women," he said. *Reuter - Vienna*

Rome wary of laughing off Bossi

Separatist leader has bounced back, writes Andrew Gumbel

With most of the country at a standstill for the holidays, Italian newspapers tend to have a hard time filling their pages to August. Not this year though, thanks to the shenanigans of Umberto Bossi, the northern separatist leader who, with the keen eye of a well-versed expert in self-promotion, has taken full advantage of the lull to get everyone talking about him and little else.

Little had been heard of Mr Bossi since June, when his campaign to establish a separate state in the north, to be called Padania, came screeching to a halt as his party, the Northern League, was humiliated in a state of local elections. But then, starting last week,

he decided it was time to go back on the offensive. The pretext was a list of appointments in Rai, the state broadcasting service, which heavily favoured supporters of government parties despite pledges by the new Prime Minister, Romano Prodi, to end such practices. Mr Bossi lashed out at the government, ordering his followers to burn their television licences and knock out transmission stations across the north of the country.

In the same breath, he expelled one of his party's most popular lieutenants, the former parliamentary speaker Irene

Pivetti, on the grounds that she wants to keep Italy as one country, albeit with a more federalist structure. Ms Pivetti instantly began organising rival rallies to Mr Bossi's, only to discover that her supporters were being intimidated by party loyalists in uniform green shirts. Over the weekend Mr Bossi dropped another bombshell, accusing the secret services of planning a bomb attack on a bank in Milan with the intention of blaming it on him.

As usual, it is hard to know how seriously to take all this since Mr Bossi's threats tend to be seven parts bluff to three

parts performance art. The secret-service allegation, for example, has fallen apart already; the details of the supposed plot bear an uncanny resemblance to an episode from a futuristic political thriller penned four years ago by one of Mr Bossi's party colleagues. Ms Pivetti's expulsion may also be a piece of political theatre intended to raise the League's profile. Two years ago another key party member, Roberto Maroni, walked out, citing irreconcilable differences with Mr Bossi, only to sink back later when no one was looking. The government is never-

theless taking Mr Bossi's antics seriously and is already beginning to worry about a formal declaration of independence for Padania set for 15 September. Beneath the buffoonery lurks the unmistakable iconography of fascism - the green shirts sound more and more like the Fascists' black shirts, while the threat of attacks on transmitters is reminiscent of German-language neo-Nazis who used the same tactics to demand separation in the South Tyrol in the 1960s. Already the demonstrations planned to mark Padania's independence day are being nicknamed the "March on the Fo" in an echo of the March on Rome which brought Mussolini to power in 1922.

Pilot piqued at cheek of
Great Plane RobbersMARY DEJEVSKY
Paris

In a raid of such brazen audacity as to compare with Britain's Great Train Robbery, a gang of armed and masked robbers held up an Air France Europe passenger plane as it landed at Perpignan in south-west France on Tuesday evening and calmly removed two mailbags full of used banknotes from the hold. They completed their "Great Plane Robbery" in four minutes flat, and are now being hunted nationwide.

The hold-up was so quickly and sharply executed that police are uncertain about how many people they are looking for. They say it is between four and six.

In radio interviews yesterday, the captain of the plane, Vincent Roy, who had flown the Airbus 320 on its hour-long flight from Paris, described what happened. "Just as we were about to leave the runway, two vehicles blocked our way," he said. "I called the control tower to ask what was going on, but then these armed and masked men came out, and I knew we were being held up."

gang raised a banner saying "turn off the engines and open up the hold" - an instruction which shocked him as much by its use of the familiar *tu* form of the verb (pilots are used to being treated with exceptional deference) as by its content. Hearing shots fired, he switched off the engine, but was cool enough to say that he had no way of opening the hold from the cockpit and told them to do it themselves - which they did. Then, Capt Roy said, they went to the hatch closest to where the cargo from Brinks - the international transporter of valuables - was, removed two mailbags and drove out of the airport. No one was hurt.

The 173 passengers and crew were allowed to leave the plane 45 minutes later. Perpignan is the airport closest to south-western French Mediterranean resorts, and this is one of the busiest holiday weeks of the summer in France.

Whether through embarrassment or confusion, no definitive value has yet been placed on the loss. Until yesterday afternoon, the only information was that the two bags weighed 28kg. The value of the contents was first esti-

mated at 4 million French francs (£509,600), but it was later disclosed that the bags contained only Spanish pesetas, and that the value could be considerably less than first thought. That such a bold-up could take place on the mainland raises serious questions about security, not just at Perpignan, but at other provincial airports. The gang was reportedly able to penetrate the runway area through a little-used back entrance that was concealed from the control tower by a mound. Local people use the mound as a vantage-point for watching the planes take off and it is also used by people coming to meet passengers. The robbers were able to wait there unsuspected.

Moreover, although the captain raised the alarm, the gang had fled the airport before anyone reached the scene. An official inquiry into the robbery was opened yesterday.

There is also a question about the transport of cash by air. Current French regulations require sums larger than 200,000 francs to be escorted by at least three guards when taken by road, but there are no similar regulations for the protection of air freight.

Hopes dim for
test ban treatyTONY BARBER
Europe Editor

International efforts to ban nuclear weapons tests suffered a serious setback yesterday when India made clear it would not lift its objections to a global test ban treaty. Diplomats at the 61-nation Conference on Disarmament in Geneva said there was virtually no prospect that the forum would adopt the text of the treaty, potentially the most far-reaching arms control measure in history.

The five declared nuclear powers - Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States - have all stopped testing and support adoption of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). However, India and Iran say they will not sign the treaty in its present form, partly because it does not commit the declared nuclear powers to a timetable for dismantling their weapons.

Together with Israel and Pakistan, India, which exploded a nuclear device in 1974, is regarded as a "threshold" nuclear power - one which either possesses nuclear weapons or is capable of assembling them at short notice. Both government

and opposition parties in New Delhi object to a treaty that would leave China in possession of nuclear weapons while failing to guarantee India's security. Western countries had hoped that the conference would approve the treaty at a plenary session today and send it to the United Nations in New York for ratification by member-states. However, at a committee meeting yesterday, India's chief representative in Geneva confirmed that her government would block transmission of the treaty to the plenary session. Pakistan said the CTBT talks would fail unless all nuclear "threshold" states signed it. "It is absolutely clear that this is a treaty about all nuclear-capable states. If one nuclear-capable state stays out of this treaty, the treaty is dead," said Munir Akram, Pakistan's ambassador at the talks.

The treaty would not take effect unless ratified by the five declared nuclear powers and the three "threshold" states.

Iran opposes the treaty on the grounds that it could enable foreign countries to use spy satellites to ensure compliance and demand "on-site" inspections of nuclear facilities.

Brown
delivers
New York
successDAVID USBORNE
New York

Tina Brown, Manhattan's most blighted-about British emigrée, has given one in the eye to the sceptics who have loved to hate her ever since she assumed the editorship of the high-brow *New Yorker* in 1992. Under her stewardship, she has revealed, the magazine is clawing its way back to financial health.

Details of the unlikely and quite unexpected success were laid out in yesterday's *New York Post*, which secured an unusually candid interview with Ms Brown, 42, and the magazine's president, Tom Florio.

The *New Yorker* is not there quite yet, but if the self-congratulatory assertions of the pair are to be believed, it will be soon. For years it has been assumed by the city's media watchers that the weekly, beloved by East Coast intellectuals, could never turn a buck. "It has been four long, hard years - but it is exciting to see all our work pay off," Ms Brown said. "By the end of next year we should be in profit."

Married to Harold Evans, the former editor of the *Sunday Times*, Ms Brown has a right to be pleased. Since moving from *Vanity Fair*, she has come under attack from *afficionados* who accused her of trying to bring it down. The most recent firestorm occurred when the comedienne Roseanne Arnold helped edit one of its issues.

"In the past many people in this industry treated Tina a bit like a schoolgirl; they wouldn't show her the business side of publishing," said Mr Florio. "But we did and she helped us get to where we are now."

Although circulation has risen nearly 40 per cent, the recovery has also been helped by price increases and cost-cutting not previously experienced by the *New Yorker* culture.

Ms Brown denies she has taken it downmarket. "I am really proud of it. It's hard to have that kind of circulation increase with cerebral material."

501 من الاموال

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Conflicting evidence: An investigator with an engine from the plane, which is being reconstructed to try to find why it crashed Photograph: AP

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obituaries / gazette

Edgar Mansfield

Edgar Mansfield deserves much of the credit for the revival of British bookbinding in the second half of the 20th century. He galvanised bookbinding design and freed it to move forward.

The centenary of the death of William Morris has prompted much to be written about Morris and the Arts & Crafts movement which spread his ideas of the value of handwork, and the decorative style of his fabric and wallpaper designs.

This style, in a form disseminated first by the gentleman amateur T.J. Cobden-Sanderson, who was prompted to take up bookbinding by May Morris, dominated British fine bookbinding for the next half-century, largely as a result of the manual written by his apprentice at the Doves Bindery, Douglas Cockerell.

Bookbinding and the Care of Books, first published in 1901 and still in print 95 years later, probably remains the first manual that most beginners will pick up. It treats cover design only in terms of ornamentation built up from a few simple decorative units by the repetition of individual tooled impressions, plain or gold.

The Arts & Crafts style appeared in French bindings with the work of Marius Michel, but the Parisian ateliers and their designers went on to absorb Art Deco, Surrealism and Cubism, and by the 1930s and 1940s they were producing gloriously extravagant fine bindings of the spectacular illustrated editions of *Le Livre* for collectors, whilst the English taste for tradition and conformity and that curious cult of "original condition" in book collecting left little creative work for fine binders.

No wonder that Philip James, reviewing a 1949 exhibition of modern bookbindings in the *Studio*, wrote:

[The exhibition] reveals that this noble, ancient art is very much alive in France, even if it is restricted in its most developed state to the commissions of wealthy patrons, but that it is virtually dead in this country. Bookbinding is now one of those handicrafts, like pottery or weaving, which attract a few isolated performers who feel the same compulsion to create as animates the painter or sculptor. Today the work is its own reward, so few are the commissions, so dim the prospects of a revival.

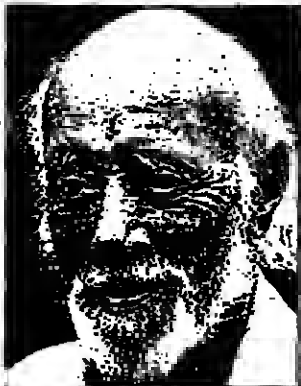
He continued with a plea: A vigorous school of original binders who, while respecting the limitations imposed by the nature of a book and its use by the reader, yet work in a

style which springs from contemporary art forms, is absolutely necessary for the development of bookbinding.

Edgar Mansfield was just such an original binder and, the writer was seeking and, the year before, he had commenced teaching design to bookbinding students at the London School of Printing. Perhaps it was because Mansfield had come to Europe as an outsider that he could accept and absorb the modern movement in art, at a time when we were trying to ignore it or dismiss it with ridicule.

Born in London in 1907, he was taken to New Zealand by his parents at the age of four, matriculating from Napier Boys' High School in 1923, he then began 10 years of study and teaching in art and crafts. He returned to London in 1934 to extend his studies, of pottery at Camberwell School of Art & Crafts and bookbinding under William Matthews at the Central School of Art & Crafts. In 1936 he began an extensive course in design at the German Reichmann School in London under Elsa Taterka. Following war service with the British army from 1941 to 1946 he was repatriated to New Zealand, but returned to London in 1947 to continue bookbinding and design. For much of his active life he divided his time between the two countries, and considered himself "a New Zealander through and through".

He had been elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 1934, and in 1950 was elected Member of the German Bookbinders Guild (MDE). From 1948 to 1964, he taught design and colour at the London School of Printing. Even in art schools in the Fifties, abstraction and "School of Paris" ideas had barely penetrated and artists such as Picasso and Henry Moore were stock figures of fun to *Punch* cartoonists. But Mansfield's enthusiasm and encouragement to students and the younger binders was infectious. A "Mansfield style" was detected in the new designs from the London College of Printing students, some of whose names became familiar in bookbinding circles: Don Etherington and Faith Shannon for instance, and Anthony Cairns, later to be Director of the Conservation Laboratory at Trinity College Dublin, who pushed Mansfield's technique of manipulating the grain of the



Mansfield: an outsider

leather during covering to the extreme of expressive leather puckering as the binding's sole design medium.

I have been saddened that subsequent generations of bookbinders have seemed unaware of what he achieved on their behalf. I had the good fortune to know him for four decades, since I—a green young student—was invited to attend the first meeting of the Guild of Contemporary Bookbinders in Bernard Middleton's London workshop at 63 Broadwick Street, Soho, on the evening of 7 April 1955. This small group of like-minded bookbinders, banded together to mount exhibitions of their work under the initial prompting of Bernard Middleton and Arthur Johnson, with Edgar Mansfield as their President, became the present Designer Bookbinders, a flourishing society with about 700 members world-wide, and currently 17 Honorary Fellows, 28 Fellows and eight Licentiates.

During his Presidency of the Guild of Contemporary Bookbinders, from 1955 to 1968, the society mounted an ambitious exhibition programme and many travelling exhibitions in Europe and across the United States were arranged, as well as regular exhibitions at Foyle's Gallery in London, plus others elsewhere, of which the Harrods exhibition of 1958 was perhaps the pivotal event, attracting wide notice in Britain and on the Continent. Mansfield taught us the benefits of publicity, that our work should be photographed and published where possible, and particularly through publication in German, French and Dutch trade magazines. He was made an Honorary Fellow of Designer Bookbinders in 1968.

His teaching at the London School of Printing extended

until he retired in 1964 in order, in his words, "to concentrate entirely on creative experiment, and to spend more time at home—in New Zealand". In the 1979 Birthday Honours list came his appointment as OBE for services to New Zealand, and in 1980 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of British Sculptors (FRBS).

Although he never stopped creating new drawings and designs, Edgar Mansfield had ceased binding about 20 years ago, with the exception of one presentation binding—a commission reluctantly accepted from the New Zealand authorities some time after he had decided that his eyesight no longer allowed him to continue binding to the high standard he desired. It was a wedding gift for Princess Anne, completed in 1974, after which he concentrated on his sculpture and drawings until he agreed to collaborate with James Brockman on a group of 25 new bindings commissioned by K.D. Duval and C.H. Hamilton. The evening of 30 November 1993, when we gathered in the King's Library of the British Museum to see these bindings, exhibited alongside the Designer Bookbinders' Bookbinding Competition entries, was a rare chance for the younger generation to glimpse him for the first time, and a happy reunion with many old friends.

I was one of many binders to receive encouragement and advice about my work from Edgar Mansfield. A letter from c1960 gives some of the flavour of his correspondence: I am still struggling frantically with design problems and hope you are too... I would urge you to visit the the other, see books like *Kaplan's New Landscape in Art & Science* & books on Klee especially... You designing will become more difficult & take longer in course of time but I urge you to work like hell & get all you can out of it. There will never be enough creative work available for our future needs—of that I am absolutely certain. All the best, Edgar.

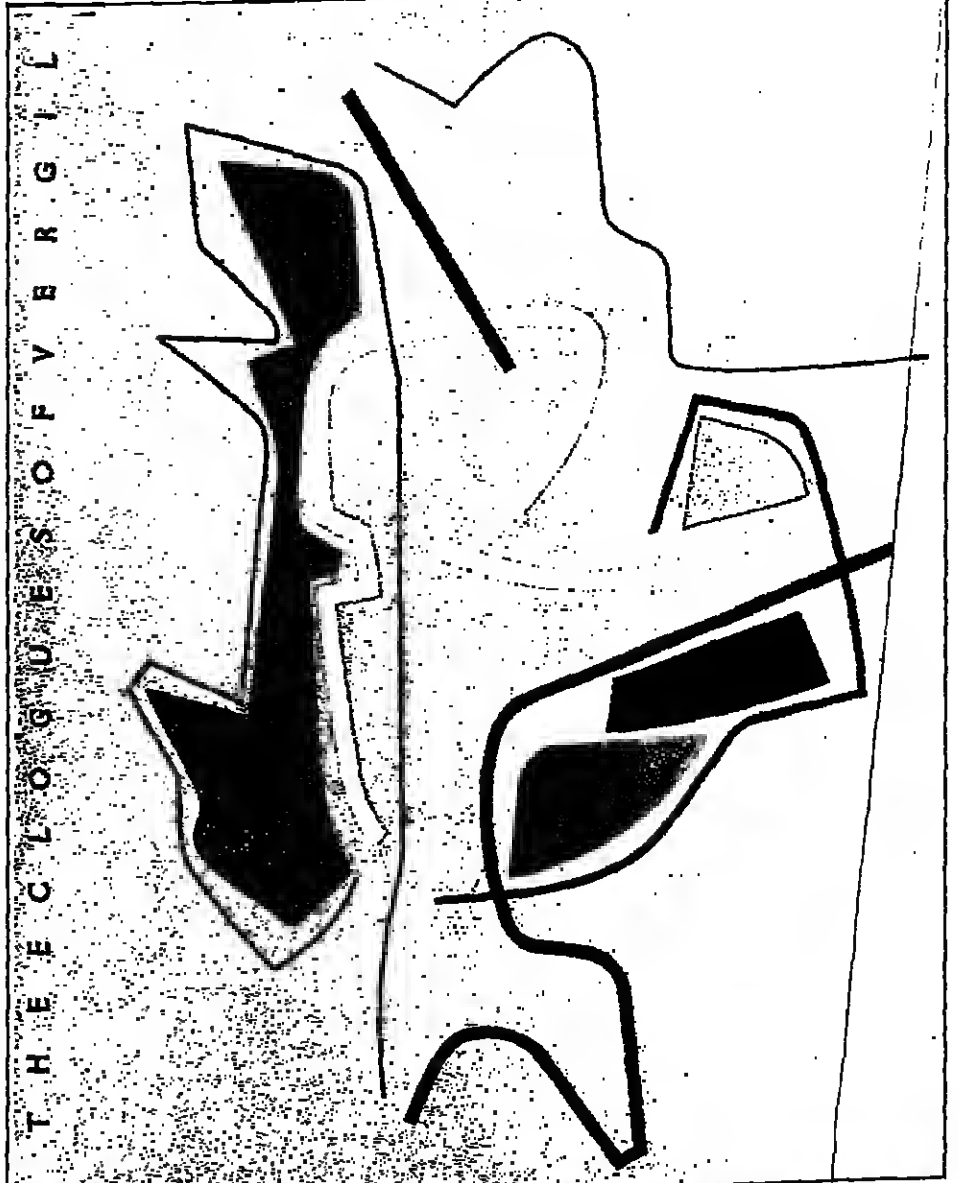
For him, the creative act could be as soon be drawing, or painting, or sculpture, as bookbinding, an attitude which may have helped to ease the moment when his eyesight would no longer allow him to translate his designs into that medium.

Those who admire Edgar Mansfield's bindings and are convinced of their importance place in the development of bookbinding may be discon-

certed by the thought that the craft could matter less to him than he does to it. He seemed most unconcerned about the quality of the volumes he chose to cover; they were often standard publishers' editions and could be inferior examples of printing. The book he chose to bind most frequently, H.E. Bates's *Through the Woods*, was hardly Cobden-Sanderson's ideal book or "the book beautiful", although it became the vehicle for a memorable series of designs. Very likely the cost of hiving examples of fine printing was the limiting factor in the early days, when collectors were not interested in his work; but as he became recognised he had the opportunity to bind better books. Nor was he interested in refining the structure of his bindings. Having arrived at a simple and serviceable routine, he standardised it. It is as though Mansfield thought of the book as no more than the blank canvas awaiting his creative act.

The nature of the surface of a Mansfield binding and its tactile quality is most important, as befits the work of a sculptor. His preference was always for unpolished and unpressed goatskin, enhanced with surface markings and bleaches, especially the native tanned and dyed skins once obtainable from Nigeria that displayed variations of tone and colour, if necessary with his own added ink markings. He often heightened the grain texture on the leather of his bindings by rolling the damp skin on itself before pasting, and later brushing towards the spine with the palm of his hand across the surface of the leather in the act of covering the book.

Embellishment of the book cover had traditionally been a matter of borrowings from the decorative arts, and even the French Art Deco binders that acknowledged Cubism did so at second hand, following its adoption as a style for interior decoration. The originality and novelty of his binding designs was that they used the language of fine art. That Mansfield was inspired by the abstract painting of his times is obvious: one can see echoes of Mondrian, Klee and Picasso in the sometimes jagged, sometimes playful, shapes of his inlays and in the dancing lines of his tooling. Surrealism is an influence, and an interest in the ges-



Dancing lines: binding by Mansfield for Virgil's *Eclogues* (Croom Helm Press, 1927)—native-dyed bright yellow morocco with recessed inlays in white, black, grey, green and red, tooled in blind and black, 1983

tural abstraction of some of the American painters may be detected in what he called his "scribble" designs that began to appear from 1950 on. It is also possible to see these as having evolved from his use of textured areas of impressions from small dot and line tools. There are recurring motifs like the eye/sun inlaid circle and a "lobster-claw" conjunction of curved shapes. Mansfield was fond of musical analogies as a basis for his design structure: sonata form, fugue, and variations on a theme.

The glorious range and breadth of Edgar Mansfield's invention is a delight to observe as one traces the development of his art from the early search for a means of expression in the bindings of 1937-50 through to designs completed in his 86th year. His strongest inspiration,

in sculpture, drawing and book-binding design, came from natural forms, evident both in the book titles he returns to so often—*Cowry Matters*, *Through the Woods*, *Down the River*, *Four Hedges*, *The Seasons*—and in the growing, flying, swimming, branching forms, and the lines and textures that so often choke foliage, the leaf and its veins, wing, and fin.

We are fortunate in having an excellent record of his design philosophy and processes and the technical means he devised to create his bindings in the book *Modern Design in Bookbinding: the work of Edgar Mansfield* (1966). A new edition is long overdue.

Mansfield will be remembered for demonstrating that bookbinding is as appropriate a medium for the artist as painting and sculpture. He was

an energetic and enthusiastic campaigner against a conservative trade's incomprehension, ridicule and mistrust of modern design in fine bookbinding. His long-held and as yet unfulfilled hope was for recognition for the best of modern bookbinding by the fine art world. One does indeed wonder at the convention which would accord artistic status to his sculptures but not to his bindings.

Trevor Jones

James Frank Edgar Mansfield, bookbinder, born London, 11 February 1907; FRSA 1934; President, Guild of Contemporary Bookbinders 1955-68; Honorary Fellow, Designer Bookbinders 1968; OBE 1979; FRBS 1980; married 1982. Mr. Gladys Lockhead (died 1991; one stepson); died Bexley, Kent 10 August 1996.

Marshal Antonio de Spínola



Spínola: swagman stick

Antonio de Spínola was the old Portuguese colonial soldier who became the improbable hero of Portugal's April 1974 revolution.

I first saw him almost on a daily basis when I was 10 years old and he was courting the daughter of a general who lived in our street. Always in uniform, with monocled right eye and horse-rider's swagger-stick, he was known in our neighbourhood as one of the young generation of officers ready to fight for Fascism and empire in the 1930s. The son of a senior official in the dictator Antonio Salazar's regime, he fought for Franco's side in the Spanish Civil War, and completed his training with Hitler's army as an observer on the Russian front.

After the Allied victory and decades of enforced stability both in Portugal and the far-flung empire, all that training and experience seemed somewhat wasted until the 1960s when, by then a lieutenant-colonel, he was sent to Angola to quell the first African nationalist uprising which eventually, with Soviet bloc support, was extended to Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique.

As a military commander in Guinea-Bissau, and after a relatively successful Africanisa-

tion programme largely based upon more modern models used in Vietnam and elsewhere, whereby nearly half of the (Portuguese) Guinean army was formed by African troops, he became something of a hero in the Portuguese colonial wars.

By then the decades old national-colonialist regime created by Salazar and halfheartedly carried on by his successor Marcelo Caetano had reached a mortal impasse. As so often happens with prolonged personal dictatorship the long experience of enforced stability degenerated into mutual fear and paralysis within the ranks of the regime, and the inability of the democratic op-

position to organise a convincing alternative. It was then that Spínola played a crucial and truly heroic role.

Since the initiative for the dramatic political impasse could only come from within the ranks of the regime, he wrote a book in which, after acknowledging that the colonial impasse could only be resolved by political, rather than military means, he put forward a plan for a Pan-Portuguese multi-racial federation or community, similar to the British Commonwealth and its French equivalent, as a way out.

In the event the book, *Portugal and the Future*, published in February 1974, was like the key that opened the door for the military *pronunciamento* cum popular and festive revolution that was to follow the arrests and deposition to Madeira first of the token President Américo Tomás and Prime Minister Caetano.

As for Spínola, he was chosen to become President of the restored Democratic Republic, almost as a reward. However, subsequent events were to show that, having opened the door to liberalisation, he was soon overtaken by the revolutionary crowd that rushed through it. During his

five-month tenure of the presidency he tried to find solutions for successive crises and the prospect of the disintegration of the old empire, with meetings with other improbable heads of state, including President Mobutu of Zaire and President Nixon of the United States, then already facing impeachment, whom he met in mid-Atlantic in the Azores.

After he was elbowed out of power in September 1974 and replaced by his left-wing rival General Costa Gomes, likewise a prominent colonial commander, the widespread fear of a Communist takeover led him to seek exile in Brazil, from where he travelled to gather support for what would be tantamount to a counter-revolution. The perceived Communist threat was eventually thwarted when a new balance of forces within the regime succeeded in re-establishing a country of law and order.

After returning to Portugal in 1976 Spínola opted for retirement in his farmhouse near Lisbon. He became a mere spectator to Portugal's accelerated development upon integration into the EEC in the 1980s under a centre-right government more to his liking. He lived to witness the Por-

tuguese eventually become richer than they had ever been while they had clung to the empire, through the vagaries of history and the benefits of Portugal's return to its European condition.

Democratic, capitalist-orientated Portugal is now one of the main investors in the war-ravaged but potentially rich former colonies of Angola and Mozambique. And, only two weeks ago, the Community of the Countries of Portuguese Language, comprising all the former five African colonies as well as Brazil, was finally formalised at a Pan-Portuguese summit in Lisbon.

António de Figueiredo

António Sebastião Ribeiro de Spínola, soldier, born Estremoz, Portugal, 11 April 1910; Commander, 345th Cavalry Group, Angola 1961-64; Provost Marshal 1964-65; Cavalry Inspector 1966-67; Deputy Commander, National Republican Guard 1967-68; Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Portuguese Guinea 1968-73; Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces 1973-74; Head, Junta Nacional de Salvação 1974; President of Portugal, 1974; married 1932 Maria Monteiro de Barros; died Lisbon 13 August 1996.

The Rev Christopher Gray

Christopher Gray had not long been a Vicar of St Margaret's, Anfield, in Liverpool, when he was murdered in front of his own vicarage. Even though he was only 32 and a priest for only three years, Gray was beginning to have a major impact on the Anglican Church's thinking on the priestly ministry.

He was Head Boy at Winchester, and then went on to Wadham College, Oxford, where he achieved a Double First with congratulations in *Ancient History* and won most of the major classical prizes. He possessed a brilliant mind and spoke with great clarity of thought. At the same time he was a quiet person, who listened carefully and was liked by his



Gray: sacerdotal ministry

teachers and contemporaries for his humanity and warmth.

After Oxford he spent a year looking after handicapped people at the L'Arche community in France, where he discovered his flair for learning living languages in addition to Latin, Greek and Hebrew. When I met him in 1992 he was already a fluent speaker of French, German and Polish, and at each later meeting he had acquired other Slavic languages. His knowledge of Romanian, Czech, Slovak and Lithuanian contributed to his being able to be an ambassador for Anglicanism to the Christian churches of these recently liberated countries.

In 1992, after training for the priesthood at Mirfield in Yorkshire, he became a curate at St Jude's Church, Cantril Farm, in Liverpool. Cantril Farm is a 1960s housing estate with one of the highest unemployment rates in England; the community there was under siege, with high levels of drug use, crime and violence. Gray knew the limits of a priest, but within those limits he exercised a sacerdotal ministry, especially working with young people who had no connection with the Church. He did not see himself as doing the work of a social worker but felt strongly that the Church is responsible for giving

meaning to the lives of everyone who presents himself to her.

It was during his time as curate that he wrote a puzzlingly prophetic chapter, "Who is the Priest?", in *The Fire and the Clay* (1993), which is a brilliant fusion of theory and practical theology. He described Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd as the chief model for the priest: The supreme act of the shepherd is to lay down his life for the sheep... (Priests are called to be people who grow to be like Christ in their faithful service of their flock, even to the point of sacrificing their own lives).

In 1995 he was moved to St Margaret's, Anfield, and given the diocesan portfolio of Director of Evangelism. He had been in this post for just over a year and was beginning to make a mark in the Liverpool diocese with his vision of a Church as a people who are confident in their faith and who feel glad to share it. Gray's decisive intellect told him what had to be done and it was his faith that gave him courage to complete the task in the only way he could.

Bernhard Schimemann

Christopher John Gray, priest, born Portsmouth 2 January 1964; ordained deacon 1992, priest 1993; Priest-in-Charge, St Margaret's, Anfield 1995-96; died Liverpool 13 August 1996.

Mel Taylor

Mel Taylor was a pioneer rock 'n' roll drummer, and a vital member of the Ventures throughout most of their career as America's foremost instrumental rock group.

Although Taylor was not a founder member of the Ventures, he played on many of their greatest hits, including the 1964 re-make of "Walk Don't Run" and their version of "Hawaii Five-O", the television theme-tune notable for its dramatic drum introduction.

The art of pop drumming was liberated and given a great

boost by the advent of Surf music during the early Sixties. Instrumental groups like the Chantays, who hit with "Pipeline" in 1963, and the Surfaris, whose "Wipe Out" charted the same year, made heavy use of a compelling new tom-tom rhythm that reached its apogee in "Hawaii Five-O". Rock 'n' roll until then had relied on a tightly knit shuffle beat, derived mainly from Rhythm and Blues.

It was the strong blend of dynamic drumming and echoing guitars that gave the Ventures their special sound and appeal and made them one of the most influential bands of the Sixties, although they in turn were influenced by the surfing craze.

They were formed in Seattle in 1959 by Bob Bogle and Don Wilson (guitars), with Nokie Edwards on bass and Howie Johnson on drums. Their first single, "Walk Don't Run", was recorded for Blue Horizon in 1959, a label formed by Don Wilson's mother. Copies were mailed to DJs, but the record only became a Top Ten hit and a million-seller, when it was released on

the Dolton label in America and on Top Rank in Britain. It was the same year the Shadows scored their big instrumental hit with "Apache".

The Ventures developed the policy of giving a guitar treatment to familiar themes and they had hit with "Perfidia" in 1960 followed by "Rum-Bunk-Shus!" in 1961. The same year Howie Johnson was injured in a car crash and was replaced by Mel Taylor.

Thereafter Taylor recorded and toured extensively with the Ventures and was heard on

"Walk Don't Run '64", a re-working of their original 1960 hit. Although fashions changed and the Ventures' popularity waned during the Beatles era, the group scored one of their biggest hits in 1969 with their version of "Hawaii Five-O" which got to No 4 in the US *Billboard* chart.

Bob Hurtt, the Kinks' drummer and author of a forthcoming book on percussion history, says Taylor was an important figure and an excellent performer. He acknowledges that the early Ventures records

made considerable impact on British groups.

We'd never heard anything like those 16th-note beats on "Walk Don't Run" on a pop record before. As far as we know Mel Taylor was the drummer on the second version, but there is never enough evidence about these things. It could easily have been Sandy Nelson! And it's a moot point about who played that very complicated run on the original TV soundtrack version of "Hawaii Five-O". Many believe it to be the work of session drummer Hal Blaine.

In 1973 Mel Taylor left the Ventures to form Mel Taylor

and the Dynamics but returned to the fold in 1978 and remained with the band for the next 18 years. They continued to record a stream of albums, many solely for the Japanese market and usually featuring instrumental versions of the hits of the day.

As their own hits dried up in Britain and the United States, the band increasingly turned its attention to Japan where they became hugely popular and toured every year. By the mid-Nineties their clanky guitar sound had become fashionable once more, thanks to the in-

clusion of their classic "Surf Rider" in the 1994 Quentin Tarantino film *Pulp Fiction* when it was performed on the soundtrack by the Lively Ones.

In 1996 the Fender musical instrument makers issued a line of Ventures model electric guitars, as a tribute to the veteran group's contribution to rock music.

Chris Welch

Mel Taylor, drummer, born New York City 1934; married (three sons, three daughters); died Los Angeles 11 August 1996.

BIRTHS

ROSSITER: On 9 August 1996, to Janice (née Horton) and Timothy, a daughter, Catherine Helen, sister to Jennifer and not forgetting Peter.

STEVY: On 7 August, to Michelle (née Meakin) and Tim, a daughter, Rebekah Alice Dray.

DEATHS

MCCULLOCH: Keith, on 13 August 1996, aged 41. Classics master at

Births, Marriages & Deaths

King's School, Worcester, married devotedly at home by his wife Frances, and his children Harriet, Maureen and Emily. At peace with herself.

Clemm, who all loved him very much. Keith's mother and brothers, John and Stuart are grateful to Maureen, the children and the nursing team for the care shown to Keith and for the help, love and kindness of friends and neighbours. Funeral at the Priory, Malvern, 20 August, at 12.45pm.

PERREY: Caroline Richards, on Monday 12 August 1996. Wife of Rupert, mother of Graham, Paul, Alexis and Christopher. Grandmother of Sally and Emily. At peace with herself.

Birthdays

The Princess Royal, 46; Sir Charles Carter, economist, 77; Mr Jim Dale, actor, 61; Mr Edmund Dell, former government minister, and chairman, Prison Reform Trust, 75; Mr Hans Felbush, mural painter and sculptor, 98; Mr James Flecker, Headmaster, Ardingly College, 57; Mr Lukas Foss, composer, 74; Mrs Jenny Hanley, actress, 49; Dame Wendy

Hiller, actress, 84; Miss Rita Hunter, soprano, 63; Lord Inagrow, former Lord-Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, 79; Miss Joan Jefferson (Lady Appleby), former Headmistress, 50; Mr Jeek Lynch, former Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, 79; Mr Edward McMillan-Scott, MEP 47; Sir Patrick Nairne, Chancellor, Essex University, 75; Sir Kenneth Newman, former

Commissioner, Metropolitan Police, 70; Mr Gen Kenneth Peckis, 70; Mr Oscar Peterson, jazz pianist, 71; Sir Oliver Popplewell, High Court judge, 69; Professor Sir Leon Radzinsky, criminologist, 90; Lady Jean Rankin, Extra Woman of the Bedchamber to the Queen Mother, 91; Mr Martin Redmond MP, 59; Mr Jack Russell, cricketer, 33; Sir Michael Rutter, child psychiatrist, 63; Air Vice-

Marshal John de Milt Severne, Extra Equerry to the Queen, 71; Lord Steyn, a Lord Justice of Appeal, 64; Sir Stephen Timmins, circuit judge and former Chief Inspector of Prisons in England and Wales, 66; The Hon William Widdowson MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 56; Sir Kenneth Warren, engineering consultant, 70; Air Vice-Marshal Sir William Wharren, 57.

Announcements for Deaths **BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS** should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3DT, telephoned on 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2018, and are charged at 65.50 a line (VAT extra).

Changing of the Guard The Household Cavalry Mounted Band plays the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 1pm.

The timetable should rule out elitism



ONE CANADA SQUARE, CANARY WHARF, LONDON E14 5DL
TELEPHONE 0171-293 2000 / 0171-345 2000 FAX 0171-293 2435 / 0171-345 2435

This morning a familiar scene is being played out in sixth-form blocks all over the country. Everywhere, nervous groups of 18-year-olds are waiting at their schools to receive the envelopes that contain their futures. There will be tears of joy and of bitter disappointment. Some students will sink to the floor in relief or despair, others will rush home to spread the good news or to lick their wounds in private. There can be few places in England where such extremes of emotion are being displayed today.

These scenes have barely changed in the 45 years since A-levels were first introduced, but in fact almost everything else about them is different. In 1951, less than five per cent of 18-year-olds took the exams, and one in three failed. Now a third take them and six out of seven pass. In the Fifties about 30,000 people went to university each year; this autumn 290,000 will do so.

With so many more people taking these exams, common sense would suggest that the pass rate should have gone down. After all, when only the very brightest took them they must have had a better chance of getting through, one might argue. But common sense is not always right.

At first glance it does appear curious that the pass rates have continued to go up while the staying-on rates have grown, but there is no disputing the fig-

ures. In 1968 the A-level pass rate was 65 per cent, while today it has risen to 86 per cent. Not surprisingly, this has led to anguished cries from the traditionalist end of the political spectrum about falling standards. Those who would like to see the education system frozen in its Fifties incarnation argue that we are devaluing our qualifications by allowing more and more people to pass.

To some extent, they are right. Some education academics believe that expansion may have caused a gradual change in examiners' perceptions of who should pass and who should fail. A candidate whose entry appeared only average among a narrow, elite group could appear very good among a much wider range of abilities. Although there has not been any grand conspiracy, the rapid rise in the pass rate - almost two per cent this year - is probably due in part to these incremental pressures.

But before we throw up our hands in horror and call for tighter codes of conduct for examiners, or even demand the nationalisation of the exam boards, we should think carefully about what we want from our examinations system. Ten years ago a policy decision was taken to expand the higher education system so that the proportion of people going to university would be closer to our economic rivals. There are some die-hard elitists who hanker for

the old days when only a select and tiny hand trooped off to college, while the rest got on in the university of life. But fortunately they are few: the right decision was to expand the numbers in higher education, not only because it is socially proper for the widest possible range of people to have the opportunity to achieve their full potential, but also because we need a developed workforce. The market for unskilled labour is shrinking, and, without a highly qualified workforce, Britain will not be able to compete. There is no going back.

If we are ready to accept that our

education system should aim to widen access rather than exclude all but a tiny proportion from its upper echelons, we must have an exam system to match. A-levels designed for a tiny proportion of students would be completely inappropriate in the 1990s. So, naturally and gradually, they have changed to meet the demands of the modern system.

Apart from the fact that numbers have increased, teaching methods in universities have changed beyond recognition. A-levels have adapted accordingly. In some subjects they have been broken down into modules that are examined separately rather

than through a final exam, and as a result they fit more closely to the short-course approach that is used in universities. Even if such changes have allowed A-levels to become marginally easier, is that necessarily such a bad thing? At the moment 17 per cent of those who start a course still drop out, and a further 15 per cent fail. No exam system is working properly if it automatically consigns a third of its candidates to the scrap heap.

But broadening the scope of A-levels is not enough. We need to measure and accredit students' achievements rather than setting up hurdles that only a small proportion can jump.

There are other university entrance exams. Plans to extend special papers for the very brightest pupils are already afoot, and vocational A-levels are already in place in large numbers of schools. Many mature students win places by taking access courses set up for those without conventional qualifications. Instead of trying to hold on to the past, traditionalists should throw their support behind these exams. Efforts are being made to update the A-level points system so that all students' achievements can count towards university entrance. They should be applauded and encouraged (as well as closely scrutinised). Regarding them with automatic suspicion is no help at all.

At the heart of the annual row over

A-level standards is a deep-seated elitism which is hard to shake. Even those who publicly support the principle of access for all are less sure in their hearts that they really want it. But the fact is that education is becoming broader and more diverse, and that trend is not going to be reversed. If the examinations system is not allowed to catch up, it will look increasingly like a throwback to the 1950s.

The trouble with kids today is...

Ah, those blue remembered hills! Then, of course, children roamed the countryside, climbed trees, picked bluebells, sailed wooden yachts and disappeared for afternoons on end. Now, as our report today reveals, by the age of 10 they are slapping on the lipply, plugging into the Net and imagining life with a mortgage, a motor and a mistress.

Some of this is misplaced nostalgia, but some of it is genuinely regrettable. The evidence shows that watching a lot of bad TV and silly videos adds to the developing brain. In our cities, danger on the roads imprisons children far more effectively than the fear of strangers. So parents, it's in your hands. Smash your tellys and sell your cars.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Crumbling morale in the RAF

Sir: Your article "Nimrod on a wing and a prayer" (12 August) merely touched the surface of the problems the RAF and the military are experiencing. Both politicians and senior officers are constantly denying claims that there is any problem of morale or overstretch in today's Air Force. In contrast to these denials, if you talk to the people at the front line (which I do) you will find a force in real despair at what they perceive is a lack of acknowledgement or understanding of their grievances and concerns.

One only has to read the letters page of the in-house paper the *RAF News* to find constant references to "plummeting morale", "blatant reassurances", "enough is enough" and "really hacked off" from the embattled troops. The RAF's answer to these complaints was to announce that "letters critical of... sensitive areas in the RAF... would be subject to vetting". Is this really the way to treat a professional, disciplined team?

I have recently been described, in a national newspaper, by an anonymous senior officer as "someone who has just been in the cockpit. Someone who has never been at higher levels or exposed to any proper argument and never had anything to do with anything". I acknowledge that I have never held senior office but I have been exposed to enemy fire in the Gulf and in Bosnia; I think this allows me to comment despite the fact that I did not spend my 15 years behind a desk.

The RAF is overstretched, morale is at a dangerous low, people are unhappy with the lack of direction and leadership. The real danger in this is to the personnel themselves, because they have the "can do" attitude; their dedication, professionalism and pride will not allow them to admit defeat; they can, however, be broken. If that happens the military and political leadership will have a monumental tragedy on its conscience.

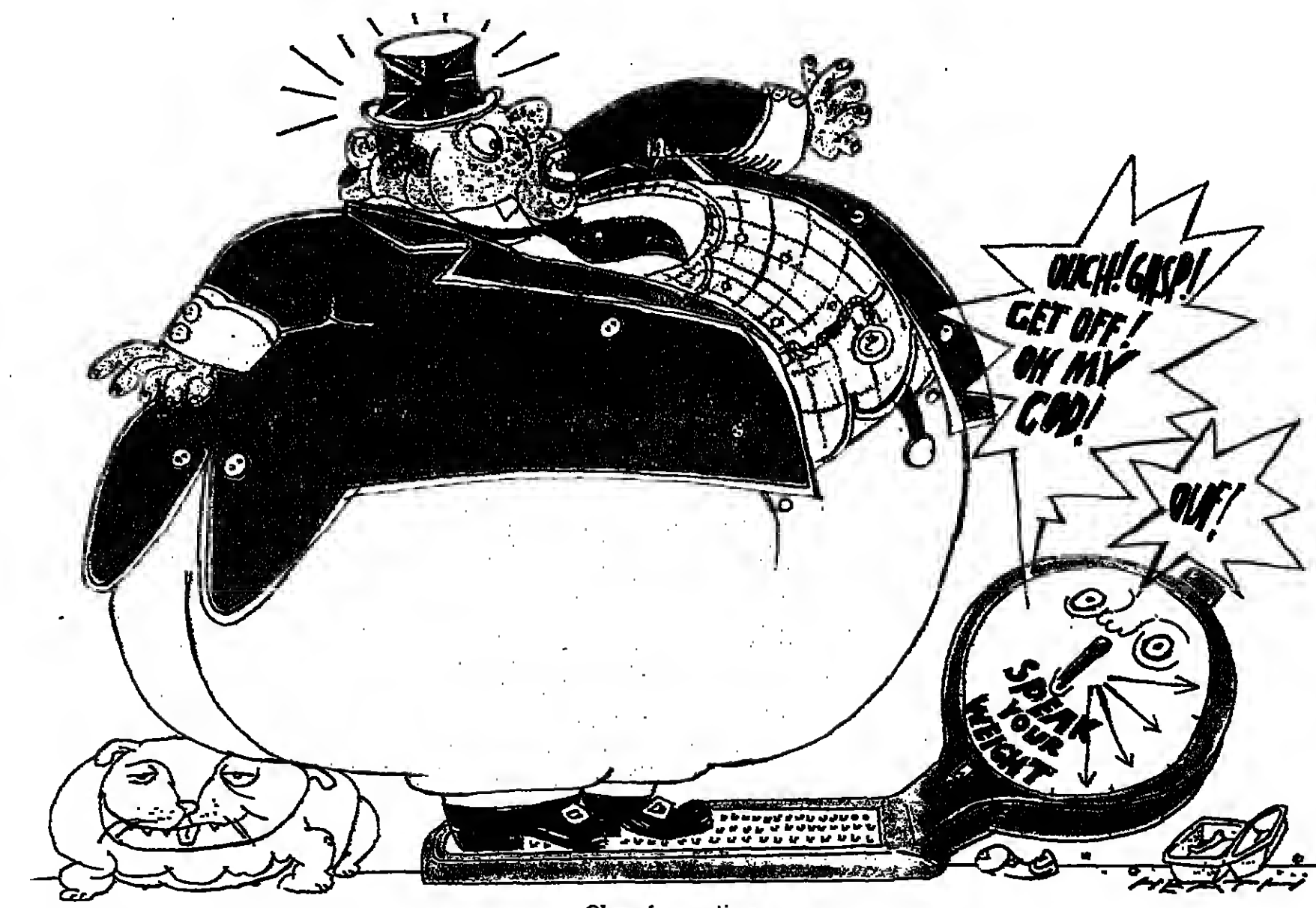
Flight Lieutenant JOHN NICHOL
Ripon, North Yorkshire

Cynical ploy of the gun lobby

Sir: The perverse logic of the Shooters' Rights Association and its London PR lobbyists defies belief.

In declaring an intention to proceed against a Scottish police force for alleged negligence over the Dunblane killings (report, 13 August) it is, in effect, seeking financial redress from the force. It follows that since Central Scotland police force is funded from Scottish public revenues, any costs arising either from the legal process or, God forbid, from the imposition of an award, will have to be extracted from all of us living or working in Scotland, including the parents of the children killed and wounded at Dunblane.

I could begin to understand the sense of proceeding against individual senior police officers who ignored advice from those in the lower ranks who felt that Thomas Hamilton was not a fit person to hold a firearms certificate; there might have been some sort of honour in that course, though it would certainly have been a less lucrative option for Guy Savage and his associates. However I would hope our judicial system, Scottish or English, will see



Obese in our time

this cynical ploy for what it is.

We are told that there is a £500m firearms industry employing 50,000 people. How much of this relates to non-imported combat handguns, rather than perfectly legitimate guns used for game sports and vermin control? Since a large quantity of handguns are presumably sold to police and military users, and will continue to be sold even if a ban were imposed, it seems unlikely that we are looking at the wholesale destruction of an industry.

DAVID J BLACK
Roxburghshire

difference when it is on your own doorstep.

Gloria Morrison
London W7

Sir: Colonel Michael Badger (letter, 13 August) states that "professional users" of firearms are not allowed to take their weapons home. Some of the categories of "personal weapons" that the armed forces have are forbidden to civilians. Moreover, troops' weapons are under 24-hour guard by adequately armed personnel. Is he suggesting that the same should apply to a central store of civilian weapons? That could only be performed by the police.

Shooting competitions take place all over the country. The participants have to travel many miles to participate (and some of these are international and Olympic events). Pistol shooters practise "dry firing" of their weapons in the same way for training as do runners and swimmers for their events, only at home. They have the same dedication as do Olympic athletes. Must we allow one man to stop all of this sport?

JM LEWIS
Newbury, Buckinghamshire

Sir: The Labour MP Chris Mullin tells us that the so-called shooting lobby is controlled by Tory grandees. Surely some mistake. The majority of handgun owners are skilled working-class people. They have invested a lot of money in their chosen hobby and will not take kindly to the Labour Party confiscating their possessions. Has Labour shot itself in the foot?

DAVID DELANEY
Leominster, Herefordshire

Hume's view on frozen embryos

Sir: Frances Kissling (Letters, 13 August) professes to find a contrast between the Vatican and Cardinal Hume on the subject of frozen embryos. In his recent statement the Cardinal explicitly reiterated the Church's teaching that "human life begins at the time of fertilisation, when a human embryo results from the fusion of egg and sperm. It is morally wrong to destroy such a human life even in its earliest stages."

Far from "cool acceptance" of the destruction of frozen embryonic human lives, the Cardinal characterised it as a symptom of the moral rot-de-sac into which acceptance of IVF has led our society. Given a situation in which every proposed embryo is treated with moral difficulties, the Cardinal preferred, on balance, the option of allowing embryos to die, once unfrozen - though not carrying out acts of direct destruction. He did not rule out the alternative of "adoption", subject to the Church's further consideration of the significant difficulties involved. No authoritative statement has been issued by Rome expressing a view on these options.

Understanding of embryonic development has evolved in the 16 centuries since St Augustine, and quite radically so in the past 20 years. Contrary to what Ms Kissling implies, recent scientific knowledge tends to confirm rather than undermine the Church's teaching on the beginnings of human life. She refers to "thousands" of spontaneous

abortions. This loss of human life is not as profligate as implied (between 8 per cent and 12 per cent according to reliable studies). But in any case, spontaneous abortion is no more an argument for procured abortions than spontaneous dying is for euthanasia.

Ms Kissling also wonders why the Church has not advocated research in this area. In fact, the Cardinal called for research and funding for alternative means of treating human infertility that would be more successful than IVF and would not involve profligate sacrifice of early human lives.

The Cardinal identified respect for human life as the central drive of the pro-life movement. Presumably "Catholics for a Free Choice" would think it right to restrict the freedom to choose to destroy human life in the womb at some stage prior to birth.

NICHOLAS COOTE
Assistant General Secretary
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
London SW1

Crusaders

Sir: I read Robert Fisk's article on the Crusaders (1 August) in which he refers to me as having visited him a few months ago. I rang Fisk on Friday 21 April 1995 (16 months ago) and announced to him the appearance of my booklet *A Message to His Holiness the Pope* and wanted him to cover it. Later in the day a Lebanese friend of Fisk visited me and got the booklet. While this clarification is marginal

to the good article Fisk wrote, yet it is necessary to put it down.

Dr GEORGES JABBOUR
Former Adviser to the President of the Syrian Republic
Damascus

Royal economies

Sir: In holding the Japanese imperial family up as a shining example, Peter Martin (letter, 14 August) seems unaware that here considerable reductions in royal staff numbers have already been made since the last war, and now published reports on palace spending show that great economies have been achieved.

Recently the Queen has volunteered to pay income tax (in addition to the indirect taxation to which she was always liable) and has undertaken the burden of the Civil List payments to all her relatives, except her husband and mother. It would be quite unreasonable to begrudge the hard-working and deservedly popular Princess Anne her title of Princess Royal.

JENNIFER MILLER
London SW15

Birth of Figaro

Monsieur: In her entertaining piece about tragedy (The DTI University, 14 August) Edith Hall says that the French dramatist Beaumarchais "composed the libretto for Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*. *Pas vrai*. The libretto was by the amusing old Lorenzo Da Ponte. Beaumarchais' various plays about Figaro and his chums provided the inspiration for this opera plus others by Rossini, Paisiello and Massenet.

Dr DAVID DEVLIN
Cambridge

Bad vibes on ultrasound

Sir: I sit down for a moment's quiet read, feeling exhausted, sick and 19 weeks pregnant, after a morning running around after my 16-month tornado. Tomorrow I'm off for my ultrasound scan - modern technology with no side-effects - and what am I faced with in today's *Independent* (13 August)? An exposé on the safety of ultrasound scans.

Great. It appears now that there is a risk to the future speech system of my baby if I go through with it. A small risk, but none the less the seed has been sown. We are currently enjoying our existing son's dalliance with random words like turtle, sky, biscuit, so it seems he has escaped the threat of speech delay after being zapped himself as a 19-week foetus. By going along tomorrow for the scan, now no longer ignorant of its potential dangers, am I knowingly putting the brain of this child at risk?

I don't think anyone will know for sure by tomorrow, so I'll drink the three pints of liquid, hope that my bladder doesn't explode in the waiting room, and pray that bad luck or bad rays don't strike my baby.

L HAMILTON
Aldbourne, Wiltshire

Struggle for peace in Angola

Sir: Bob Hughes, Malcolm Harper and others (letter, 12 July) stated that Unita was the main impediment to the peace process in Angola.

The quartering of the Unita soldiers has been slower than expected because of logistical problems which had little to do with Unita. Having surmounted them, Unita has now quartered more than 61,000 men, almost the total number of its soldiers. In July, Unita handed in its heavy weapons.

Blondin Beye, the United Nations special representative in Angola, has commended Unita for doing everything to carry out the Lusaka accords.

We were surprised by the condemnatory sweep of the letter. The authors preferred to remain silent on the obligations of the Angolan government stemming from the accords. The last report of the United Nations Security Council, for instance, called upon the Angolan government to observe the disarmament of the armed civilians; to help in the creation of a unified, integrated army; to promote the observation of human rights; to allow the United Nations to start an independent radio station in Luanda.

Talk about the "quality" of Unita men who were supposed to go to the quartering camps is inappropriate. In the Lusaka Protocol, it is not stipulated that Unita ought only to bring fit combatants. Unita is a guerrilla force begun in 1966 to resist the Portuguese and then to fight MPLA domination. Hoping that its ranks would be filled with thousands of Rambo lookalikes is to expect much.

ANIBAL KANDEYA
United Kingdom
Representative
The National Union for the Independence of Angola
(Unita)
London W1

analysis

And man became God

The artificial creation of human embryos has led to pressing new dilemmas. Peter Popham asks whether scientific innovation has outstripped our social and moral codes

"These," he waved his hand, "are the incubators." And opening an insulated door he showed them racks upon racks of numbered test tubes. "The week's supply of ova. Kept," he explained, "at blood heat; whereas the male gametes, and here he opened another door, 'they have to be kept at 35 instead of 37...'"

"Bokanovsky's Process," repeated the Director.

But one of the students was foolish enough to ask where the advantage lay.

"My good boy!" The Director wheeled sharply round on him.

"Can't you see?" He raised a hand; his expression was solemn.

"Bokanovsky's Process is one of the major instruments of social stability!"

Sixty-five years ago, in *Brave New World*, Aldous Huxley described a scene that has haunted the century: a ward of human babies in sterile tanks, gently swelling towards their perfect, painless births. In his vision of the future, humanity had mastered the science of genetics, and applied it to perpetuate a society of mindless conformity and leisure.

This week, Huxley's prediction came closer to realisation than ever before: a team of Japanese and British scientists announced that they were experimenting with a hi-tech tank in which a foetus would be able to grow to full term without ever knowing a human womb.

It was only the latest of numerous news stories that have made evident that the future of science fiction speculation is the future no longer: it is already with us. Yet late 20th century reality differs from the visions of dystopians like Huxley in that these sinister possibilities are brought about not through the agency of an omnipotent state, but through the attempts of doctors and scientists, tenuously controlled by government, to add to the sum of human happiness, or reduce the sum of human misery.

Three weeks ago came the news that some 3,000 unclaimed frozen embryos

were, in conformity with the law, to be destroyed, having reached the statutory age limit of five years. The outcry provoked by this slaughter of the innocents was barely stilled before the news emerged that a woman pregnant with twins had been granted what is called a "selective termination" to abort one of them, after claiming that she would be unable to cope with both.

Again, mass moral panic ensued. The anti-abortion campaign had not had such a shot in the arm for years, and its efforts to induce the mother-to-be to hear both twins were only cut short when it emerged that the abortion had already been performed.

Finally there was the tragicomic case of Mandy Allwood, pregnant with octuplets after disregarding her doctor's advice to remain chaste while undergoing fertility treatment, who with her errant partner Paul Hudson has since been strapped to the roller-coaster of

twin merely confirms them in their fundamental faith that we are reaping the moral disaster that States permissiveness sowed.

But it is those who acknowledge the pain of pregnant women appalled by the prospect of becoming mothers, and of infertile couples appalled by the prospect of childlessness, and who believe that if medical science can help them it should be allowed to, who have the moral dilemma - or, rather, multiple dilemmas.

Human agency creates human responsibility. Left to itself, nature is full of failures and mistakes and waste. Miscarriages, the wastage of embryos that fail to take in the womb, handicaps, sterility: all of these are the work of nature to which the helplessly simple response of the pro-lifers is endurance and resignation. But when, 18 years ago, Dr Ralph Steptoe engineered the first test tube baby, Louise

creating numerous embryos, which, if not used, must then be disposed of.

Awareness that their own embryos are dying in the laboratory, while they themselves have yet to conceive, is one of the many traumas experienced by couples undergoing IVF treatment. In order to avoid that trauma many couples opt to have their embryos frozen, giving them the opportunity of trying for one or more further pregnancies in the years ahead. But it is only a way of postponing the problem. Sooner or later they must decide to give them away to another, embryo-less couple, donate them to research or have them destroyed. Given that each embryo contains human life (but not, it can be argued, "personhood"), none of the options is easy.

The mass destruction of embryos in July was due to the fact that an arbitrary five-year limit has been put on the storage of embryos which are unclaimed, and that limit was reached. None of the embryos - the product of some 900 couples - had been claimed.

Does freezing damage embryos? The jury is out. A recent French report suggested some cell damage; in an experiment with mice, born from frozen embryos, the mice did fine until mouse old age, when they reportedly deteriorated fast. But another report from Belgium persuaded at least one British fertility clinic that freezing embryos was without risks, and they duly began doing it.

Aside from the question of damage, the freezing option raises the thorny problem of the psychological effect of their origins on children who might, if the British guidelines were to change, be born long after their parents' deaths.

In what sense was the recent abortion of a twin a watershed? So-called "selective termination" or "selective reduction" of foetuses in the womb has been carried out before, but only when multiple embryos implanted during IVF treatment have all taken, and the termination of one or more foetuses is necessary to ensure the wellbeing of the other(s). The case reported two weeks ago was the first time in Britain that a twin had been aborted for social reasons - because the mother felt that she would be unable to cope. A similar case was reported Tuesday, the pregnant woman voicing her fear that her partner would leave her if she went ahead with having twins.

The public's misgivings about the destruction of half a pair of twins for the mother's convenience, misgivings heartily stoked by the pro-life movement, has helped to reopen a more general debate about abortion. The original



The challenge now for those who endorse liberal society's achievements in reducing suffering is to find legislative solutions for these new questions

tabloid celebrity. The outcome of her pregnancy remains to be seen.

The subject of all these stories is that the moral ramifications of the creation, preservation and termination of human life are intensely complex and hard to resolve. We have put in place laws and statutory authorities which we sincerely trust will ensure that what happens in the nation's surgeries and clinics is morally and medically satisfactory; but human frailty and the imperatives of scientific development continually explode the comfortable assurance that we have got it roughly right.

In the ensuing confusion, it is the pro-life campaigners, with their dogmatic certainties, who have made hay: the widespread anguish about the incineration of unwanted embryos or the abortion of a

Brown, he accepted on behalf of his profession God's creative prerogative - but was unable to claim God's immunity from blame. Man has now established his own thriving corner of creation, but it's a corner with its own highly peculiar set of questions and problems, too.

Many of them have surfaced in lay people's minds for the first time in the past few weeks. Here are some of the most pressing:

Why must embryos die? Embryos die all the time: naturally, during a woman's menstrual cycle, and in the embryologist's laboratory because there is no certainty that a given embryo implanted in the womb will result in pregnancy, and if it doesn't the doctor wants another attempt at it. To enable him to do that means

Act legalising abortion in 1967 was designed to eliminate backstreet abortions: it was explicitly not meant to sanction abortion on demand. Yet today, it is argued, the liberality of doctors means that an abortion on demand system is what we have: only 2 per cent of the 184,000 abortions carried out in Britain annually for medical reasons.

What are the other reasons that abortion is back in the news? Last month the Conservative MP Elizabeth Peacock asked a question in the House of Commons about the occurrence here of a method of termination known as "partial birth abortion", which involves withdrawing the foetus until only the head remains inside, then piercing the skull and sucking the brains out until the head collapses. This gruesome-sounding procedure is common in America, but her question failed to elicit any information about its use here. Of course the details of all

abortion procedures make grim reading, but concern about this practice, which Mrs Peacock shares with more than 50 other MPs, has also helped to re-ignite the abortion debate.

Why did Mandy Allwood conceive octuplets? Because she disregarded her doctor's advice. In the month that she conceived, she was taking a fertility drug and he had evidence that it was proving more effective than intended. Accordingly he instructed her to refrain from sex. But she didn't.

What has genetic testing got to do with all this? Medicine's ability to diagnose diseases prenatally is advancing by leaps and bounds: already genetic testing can identify foetuses suffering from conditions such as cystic fibrosis or muscular dystrophy. In the near future many other ailments will be tracked down in the womb. But the only treatment available for such ailments is abortion. As parents are encouraged to adopt an increasingly con-

sumerist attitude to their babies - demanding only perfection, as if they were buying an item in a department store - the idea of the sanctity of life becomes ever hazier.

All the moral dilemmas thrown up by the developments in embryology and connected fields stem from the urge to gratify the desires of women and couples - to have babies, not to have babies, to have more babies, and so on. The embryology revolution is one that liberal society has inspired and smiled on.

The Warnock Commission, which reported in 1984, led to the setting up of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority of 1990, designed to regulate these issues. The fact that we are in a moral firestorm suggests that its remit has been outstripped by science. The challenge now for those who endorse liberal society's achievements in reducing suffering and increasing the sum of happiness is to find legislative solutions for these new dilemmas.

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Forgotten your car number? Make it up

I can remember the number of the very first car I owned, a Renault Dauphine called RUN 169, but I cannot remember the number of any car I have ever had subsequently.

That includes the one I have got at the moment.

Which has sometimes been embarrassing when I have been filling in registration forms at hotels or simply reporting to places with private car parks. "Car registration number?", says the form sweetly or the desk man roughly, and I sweat with humiliation. You can't say "It's G something, I think," because that is plumbing the depths of whatever the opposite of machismo is. Usually I wink and smile and say, "I'll just go and have a look," and pop outside to have a look, and they smile when I come back, because they cannot imagine that I am possibly popping outside to have a look and think I must be joking.

But I am not.

Now, however, I have learnt to remember my car number, because it has been stolen from me here in Edinburgh,

and I had to memorise it before I reported it to the police. I had parked the car outside the Pleasance, where I am performing, and when I left it it had two number plates and when I came back it only had one. The front number plate had gone. It's strange how naked a car looks without a number on the front. Or perhaps it makes it look as if it is wearing a mask.

"It's almost certainly illegal to drive around without a number plate," my wife said. "We are almost certainly breaking some regulation every time we go out in a car," I said.

"True," she said. "But seldom as obviously as by driving around without a number plate."

True. So the next morning I got up, fed the meter and approached a friendly traffic warden. At least, he was friendly when it became clear I wasn't either going to plead or argue with him.

"I've had my front number plate nicked," I said. "What should I do?"

He had no idea. He talked



Miles Kingdon

into the little phone on his shoulder to the boss. "There's a fellow here had his number plate stolen. What should he do? Uh huh ... Aye ... right..."

He turned to me.

"Report to the West End police station in Torphichen Place."

When a Scotsman says "Torphichen", it comes out as a cloud of saliva, but eventually I got him to write it down and off I went to the West End police station, which is not half as grand as it sounds - in fact, all police stations seem to acquire a dusty brown air of resignation and sloth from their birth, and this one was no different.

"Took the number plate and left the car, did they?" said the policeman. "You were lucky."

"But why would anyone want to steal a number plate?"

"Well, these days a lot of cars are stolen to order, then they have to get a number plate to go with it. What's the number of your car?"

I resisted the urge to say that I would pop out and have a look. In fact, to guard against this I had already written the number down on my hand. I sneaked a look.

"It's G357 UAM."

I wasn't quite sure of this, as the way I had written the G looked like a C, but it sounded near enough, and I thought a C reg car would probably be too old. (You can tell how much I know about cars.)

"Right," said the friendly policeman, waving a theft report form at me. "Take this and if anyone stops you, show them this. That'll get you on your way again. We'll be in touch if we find a stolen car with your number."

What he didn't say was whether or even where I should buy a new one. I don't know

where you should go in Edinburgh to get car number plates. What I do know is that in the print shop round the corner from me they sell self-adhesive letters of just the right size and typeface for a number plate, so as a temporary measure I marched in and said that I wanted a G and a 3 and a 5 and a 7 and a U and an A and an M. Already I was beginning to memorise my number.

"Sorry," said the man. "We've got the rest, but we're out of the letter A."

After a little debate I bought a V and a hyphen, so that I could turn the V upside down and stick the hyphen across to convert it into an A. Seconds later I was kneeling in front of my car, peeling the backing off letters, getting them stuck on my hand, peeling them off my hand and sticking them on to my car. I now have the only car in Edinburgh with paper letters on the front which look as if they had been arranged by a child during her first day at kindergarten. But at least I can remember the number of my car.

سكرا من الاميل

1

Foul, abusive and embarrassing language – it's par for the course on the floor of Liffe

NIC CICUTTI

A top trader on the London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange, the biggest derivatives exchange in Europe, has been fined for using "foul, abusive and embarrassing" language against a member of staff.

Colin "Ned" Kelly, who works at one of Liffe's most prestigious firms, Hills Independent Traders, was fined £500 for abusing one of the Exchange's floor-based "observers".

About 18 months ago Mr Kelly, who is reputed to earn more than £250,000 a year, was the subject of a complaint that he abused a black trader. It was alleged that he jumped up and down, imitating a baboon and making monkey noises at the trader.

Colleagues of Mr Kelly said the fine, levied in the past month or so and notified on the Exchange's disciplinary notice-board, was out of proportion to the relative severity.

Each month, a number of fines of £50 or more are levied against Liffe's young traders for a range of offences, including swearing, jostling, flicking trading cards at each other, moving out of their allotted positions, even fighting in the trading floor's pits, where business activity takes place daily.

Mr Kelly's behaviour was considered graver by Liffe's disciplinary body because the person he abused was one of its officials rather than a colleague.

Traders suggested the pattern of fines levied by the Exchange is symptomatic of an aggressive, racist culture pervasive among Liffe's traders, many of them young men who have come on to the trading floor straight

from school. The culture of aggressive "work and play" that prevails at Liffe is said to be fostered by intense competition in the pits, where trading is carried out by hundreds of people in "open outcry", striking deals by traditional face-to-face methods.

"We are not all like this, but there are some serious animals down there," one trader said. "There are some people who you would not like to meet in a pub at 10.30pm, after they have had a few drinks."

In one incident last year, trouble among traders flared after a meal in a private dining

'Sure there are people who will scream and shout. This is a high-testosterone business'

room at one of London's most exclusive restaurants turned into an ugly fracas in which the police were called, although no criminal charges were brought.

On another occasion, a trader's night out in a curry house in the Brick Lane area of east London ended in a fight when, in a case of mistaken identity, local Bengalis believed the diners were members of a neo-Nazi organisation.

In September, sniffer dogs were brought out to the trading floor after a young trader was caught with cannabis. Other traders said that while spot searches had reduced the likelihood of drugs being discov-

ered, the use of cocaine and "speed", or amphetamine sulphate, was still relatively common among traders.

One trader who no longer works in the pit but deals by telephone, said: "You have to remember that we are talking about people who may be trading on their own behalf and could be losing several thousands of pounds in a matter of minutes. It's hardly surprising that in the heat of the moment they could scream abuse at each other."

A trader who has been at Liffe for some 18 months, said: "If you are black you will get called nigger, jungle bunny or things like that. Some guys will just have a go. Racism should not be a thing that happens but when people get put together in a stressful environment it does go on."

Another trader, a member of the Liffe board, who refused to be named, said: "Sure, there are some people who will scream and shout. But this is a high-testosterone business, with those working in it aged between 18 and 30. Some are even younger. The things they get up to are typical of your average working-class kid."

"I can honestly say that things like racism don't go on here. I've got an Asian and a West Indian guy working for me and they don't get any abuse."

"There might be the odd word, like if you have a certain type of hair they might call you curly. But if you were balding, you might be called Skull. It is part of banter and will come from your own colleagues, not from other firms."

While up to 30 per cent of those on the Liffe floor are now women, most carry out back-of-



Fever pitch: Colin "Ned" Kelly (circled) has been fined £500 for unruly behaviour against an official observer on the Liffe trading floor

face functions or are "yellow-jackets", runners between traders and their firm's box. The Exchange said yesterday that it does not keep records of people from ethnic minorities who work on the floor.

Karin Forske, director of operations and surveillance at Liffe, yesterday refused to give

details of any fine levied on Kelly, saying it was not the Exchange's practice to announce disciplinary action taken against members. Mr Kelly could not be contacted for comment.

Steve Hills, joint managing director of Hills Independent Traders and also a member of the Liffe board, confirmed yes-

terday that Mr Kelly had been fined by the Exchange.

"One of the things that highlight a good trader is 'pit awareness', where you are aware of what is happening 20 feet away even when everyone around you is shouting their heads off," Mr Hills said.

"Colin is tall and very broad

and when he shouts, I can sometimes hear him 20 yards away in my box, above all the other shouting."

"I think Colin was upset that one of his trades was not heard and he may have felt that he was being ignored. He moved across the other side of the pit [to make the trade] and was then asked

[by an 'observer'] to get back. "He may have shouted at the official a bit. Colin now accepts that what he did was wrong and that whatever happens you do not have a go at the referee." Mr Hills said he backed Liffe's get-tough policy against traders, particularly in cases of abuse of officials.

Ofgas delays final pricing formula

CHRIS GODSMARK
Business Correspondent

The gas industry regulator, Ofgas, is to wait another week before releasing its controversial final price formula for the British Gas pipeline business, TransCo. Sources within British Gas suggested the differences between the two sides over the price controls remained unbridgeable, and TransCo employees were now starting the lengthy and complex task of preparing for a referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Ofgas said the final proposals, which are the subject of one of the most intense arguments ever between a regulator and privatised utility, will be unveiled next Wednesday. The final formula was originally due at the end of July but was delayed until "mid-August".

It is believed British Gas was under the impression that

publication would take place today, and interpreted yesterday's announcement of a final date as a further delay.

An Ofgas spokesman insisted the regulator, Clare Spottiswoode, who returned from a fortnight's holiday on Monday, "will only put something out when she is good and ready." He continued: "this weekend will give us time to reflect over the proposals".

British Gas was yesterday playing down suggestions that a compromise was impossible. But a source said TransCo's "formula review team", which has been working for months on the price controls, was preparing to go to the Monopolies Commission. "We've done an MMC inquiry before [in 1993] and we are getting ready again. It is our understanding that Ofgas is starting to put together their case for the MMC as well," the source said.

Ofgas has proposed a re-

duction in the size of TransCo's asset base from around £17bn to between £9bn and £11bn, on which it will be allowed to earn a rate of return. The change would cut its revenues from next April by 20 per cent to 28 per cent, equivalent to a £30 cut out of the average domestic bill. British Gas has warned this would mean a reduction in its revenues of up to £850m, which could only be achieved by cutting up to 10,000 jobs and putting service levels at risk.

But a source said TransCo's "formula review team", which has been working for months on the price controls, was preparing to go to the Monopolies Commission. "We've done an MMC inquiry before [in 1993] and we are getting ready again. It is our understanding that Ofgas is starting to put together their case for the MMC as well," the source said.

Granada earmarks media partners for expansion

MATHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

Granada Media Group, part of Gerry Robinson's hotels and leisure conglomerate, has earmarked as many as six US joint-venture partners to co-develop television programmes for sale around the world, as a step towards expanding its international media business.

The company is also in talks with at least two UK cable operators – Nynex CableComms and Telewest Communications – about developing "City TV" cable channels in Manchester and Liverpool.

The move emerged yesterday as the group, headed by Duncan Lewis, the former boss of telephone group Mercury, unveiled an across-the-board management restructuring aimed at streamlining operations in the UK and increasing opportunities abroad and at home.

"We looked at what other global companies are doing in the sector, and considered

where we wanted to be in three years' time," Mr Lewis said. "The new structure should strengthen our capabilities."

At the core of the restructuring is a split between broadcasting and production, aimed at giving the production side greater freedom to supply programmes to other broadcasters. A new division, dubbed Granada Vision, will explore markets outside the company's core ITV businesses – London Weekend Television and Granada, the ITV franchise for the North-west.

The newly formed Granada UK Broadcasting will be headed by David Liddell, while Granada International Productions, which will focus on production, particularly for ITV, will be jointly run by Jules Burns and Andrea Wofors. All three executives were previously in senior positions at Granada.

An outside appointment is to be made within a few weeks to head Granada Vision, which will also be responsible for the group's joint venture with

BSkyB to launch satellite services later this year.

The restructuring is the latest in a series of moves by ITV companies to prepare for the onset of multi-channel television, and follows similar changes at Michael Green's Carlton and Lord Hollic's United News & Media, which owns the Anglia and Meridian regional ITV franchises.

In his first interview since arriving at Granada Media Group earlier this year, Mr Lewis stressed the changes would not lead to job losses, and said the regional nature of the company's two franchises would not be jeopardised. "We are keeping separate production operations for both Granada and LWT."

The changes suggest Granada will attempt to exploit overseas markets for its range of drama, comedy and entertainment programming. But there will be a special emphasis on local programming which could include community television channels for Manchester and



Duncan Lewis: The media group is being restructured

Liverpool, in league with local cable operators.

Mr Lewis added that Granada was still not convinced about the prospects for digital terrestrial television in the UK. "We aren't yet sure the numbers really work," he said. Granada will support the rest of the ITV sector in taking up the Government's offer of space on the digital spectrum for the "simulcasting" of existing ITV programming.

BICC falls into the red

MAGNUS GRIMOND

BICC, the cables, construction and property group, dived into the red in the first half of 1996, hit by new restructuring charges, write-offs and further provisions at its Balfour Beatty contracting subsidiary.

The group yesterday unveiled further plans to restructure KWO, its German cable making division, just nine months after a previous widespread shake-up of the business. Another 170 jobs are to go in Germany, taking the workforce down to 670 compared with 1,250 a year ago.

Chief executive Alan Jones said the previous world-wide rationalisation programme was beginning to contribute improved results. "The German cable market has, however, shown no signs of improvement in the first half of 1996 and, although losses in KWO in the first half-year were much reduced, it has been necessary to give further consideration to the group's position in that market."

After the closure of an operation making electric cable for the construction industry, BICC's operations in Germany will in future be focused on two units making telecommunications and power utility cables.

The £25m cost, of which £9m will be in cash, formed part of a £65m exceptional charge announced yesterday. The provision, which comes after a £127m charge last year, turned profits of £60m into a loss of £2m in the six months to 29 June. BICC is holding the interim dividend at 4p.

Despite a 5p rise in the shares to 320p yesterday, the figures disappointed some analysts, who cut full-year forecasts. Investment Column, page 18

Former taxman makes a killing with fantasy war games

NIGEL COPE

A former tax inspector who runs his business from a Portakabin in Nottinghamshire is proving to be one of the winners in the cut-throat toys and hobbies industry of the 1990s.

To a market increasingly dominated by computer games, Tom Kirby's Games Workshop is recording booming sales and profits. Operating as both a manufacturer and retailer, the company produces a range of

fantasy war games based on the Warhammer theme.

While the UK and US toy markets are seeing sales volumes down by 5 per cent year-on-year, Games Workshop yesterday reported a 47 per cent increase in profits, making £9m on sales 40 per cent higher at £45m.

The company opened 25 new shops last year, taking the total to 118 world-wide. Its monthly magazine, *White Dwarf*, which gives users tips on new game

strategy, is selling 100,000 copies a month.

Updated versions of the miniature toy armies are launched regularly and shipped from the factory next to the Portakabin. Teenage boys and older geomeans rush to snap up the additions to armies with names like Orks and Goblins, Dark Elves and Imperial Guard.

Devotees often play the warrior board games for days, or even weeks. A new game called *Warhammer Battle* is planned for September. Mr Kirby, a Yorkshireman who even addresses City bankers wearing jeans and a T-shirt, says the success of the company should come as no surprise.

"I know we make toy soldiers but we quite definitely do not see ourselves as being in the toy market. We are dealing with enthusiasts who love their hobbies. In our shops we teach people how to play the games and how to paint the characters. It becomes an obsession. It's com-

pletely different to buying a few toys and then chucking them away."

He likens Games Workshop to the hobby companies of the 1950s such as Hornby and Meccano. "Kids' teens is when they get really interested in certain things. Some stay with us for just a few years, others stay for life. We always say that our main competition is sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll. People go to college and they find other things."

Games Workshop is already looking for new markets to explore. It has started an operation in Hong Kong and has yet to sell its games in Japan, where Mr Kirby feels they will be popular.

The company also has operations in Europe, where sales rose by 69 per cent last year, Australia and the US. In America the company has switched to direct selling after struggling to find suitable distributors. The company has proved

STOCK MARKETS									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change%	1996 High	1996 Low	YTD High	YTD Low	YTD Change	YTD %
FTSE 100	3830.30	+6.90	+0.2	3857.10	3632.30	4.08			
FTSE 250	4351.90	+5.80	+0.1	4988.60	4015.30	3.48			
FTSE 350	1917.60	+3.30	+0.2	1945.40	1816.80	3.95			
FT SmallCap	2127.26	+1.07	+0.1	2244.36	1954.06	3.12			
FT All Share	1894.85	+3.03	+0.2	1924.17	1791.95	3.89			
New York	5635.07	-12.21	-0.2	5778.00	5032.94	2.21			
Tokyo	20981.11	+116.16	+0.6	22666.80	19734.70	0.781			
Hong Kong	11166.77	+1.10	+0.0	11594.99	10204.87	3.441			
Frankfurt	2588.68	-0.73	-0.0	2583.49	2253.36	1.801			

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	10 Year
UK	5.72	6.13	7.82	8.19	7.95	8.25			
US	5.28	5.81	6.53	6.56	6.47	6.39			
Japan	0.34	0.81	3.19	3.27					
Germany	3.28	3.44	6.29	6.79	7.02				

MAIN PRICE CHANGES									
Rises	Falls	Price (p)	Change (p)	Change%	Rises	Falls	Price (p)	Change (p)	Change%
Schroders	1040	40	4	1.0	Cookson Group	280	7	2.5	
Peabody	319	12	3.8	1.2	Glenwood Int.	332	8	2.4	
Airtours	588	18	3.2	0.5	English China Clay	260	6	2.3	

CURRENCIES									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change%	1996 High	1996 Low	YTD High	YTD Low	YTD Change	YTD %
\$/£	1.5505	-0.005	-0.32	1.5524	1.5485	0.39			
¥/£	154.85	-0.10	-0.07	155.86	153.00	2.86			
DM/£	2.3000	+0.000	0.00	2.3000	2.2900	0.10			
¥/DM	167.159	+0.000	0.00	167.159	167.159	0.00			
\$/DM	0.6484	+0.000	0.00	0.6484	0.6484	0.00			
\$/¥	0.0064	+0.000	0.00	0.0064	0.0064	0.00			

SIB to seek changes at metal exchange

The Securities and Investment Board, the City regulator, will today recommend changes in trading practices at the London Metal Exchange in the wake of the Sumitomo copper scandal.

The SIB review began after it emerged in June that Japan's Sumitomo Corporation had run up losses of £1.8bn (£1.2bn) in unauthorised copper deals. Sumitomo, which is one of the world's largest copper dealers, blamed its chief trader, Yasuo Hamanaka, who was promptly sacked.

The news led to volatile copper trading on the LME, where

the majority of trades take place. The SIB review covers metals and associated derivatives traded both on the LME and over the counter.

The SIB's investigation into Sumitomo and the LME was conducted in tandem with the Serious Fraud Office and the Commodity Futures Trading Commission of the US. Last week the SFO raided the English homes of two directors of Winchester Commodities, a metal trader.

Sumitomo expects that its own investigation will be completed within six months.

مكتبة الامارات



COMMENT

There is a lot wrong with Cadbury and Greenbury, but they are an honest attempt to deal with past abuse, an attempt to safeguard legitimate shareholder and public interest. They are not attempts to manage by prescription, and Sir Stanley knows it

Dixons chairman tries to divert the attention

Sir Stanley Kalms, chairman of Dixons, has always been a businessman who speaks his mind. Yesterday he was at it on three fronts, fulminating against Tony Blair and Brussels in the *Daily Mail*, and castigating Cadbury-style corporate governance in his annual report. The three things might seem to us as largely unrelated, but for Sir Stanley they plainly carry a common theme. He hates regulation in all its various guises. To him all three seem to stand for the same thing - binding business and management within a highly restrictive framework of rules, regulations and practices.

Sir Stanley is unimpressed by New Labour. He thinks that fundamentally the party hasn't changed at all and he believes Mr Blair's commitment to a minimum wage and the Social Chapter poses a serious threat to business. Likewise, he doesn't believe in Cadbury and Greenbury, or as he put it in the Dixons annual report, "management by prescription". Sir Stanley doesn't speak for all businessmen, naturally, but his views are representative of a fair number. Business is still highly suspicious of Labour, as is the City too. The old mistrust hasn't gone and as we approach the election, it will increase.

But Sir Stanley, though he makes good points, is wrong about the perils of regulation. Free markets don't work without rules and regulations to curb abuse. To that must also be added that market economies will be seen to have failed without some form of safety net to catch the socially disadvantaged.

Britain's opt-out from the Social Chapter and its refusal to impose a minimum wage gives some businesses in Britain a very significant competitive advantage over those in countries that have taken these things on board. If Sir Stanley really believes that Europe is for long going to allow Britain to have all the benefits of the EU without having to abide by any of its social disciplines, then he is being naive.

The same is true of the capital markets where Sir Stanley seems to want the advantages without conforming to any of the rules. There is a lot wrong with Cadbury and Greenbury, but what and all, they are an honest attempt to deal with past abuse, an attempt to safeguard legitimate shareholder and public interest. They are not attempts to manage by prescription, and Sir Stanley knows it. But then if you are paying yourself close on a million a year, you've got to find some way of diverting attention from it, haven't you?

A long and difficult road ahead of BMW

Applying German accounting rules to the profit and loss account of any British company tends to have an unpleasant effect on the bottom line. But that alone is not enough to explain why BMW does not now expect a positive contribution from Rover until some time in the next millennium.

Indeed, one of the enduring mysteries of 1994 was why on earth BMW thought it worth paying British Aerospace £800m to take Rover off its hands. The market was hardly at a peak - unlike five years earlier when Ford paid the outrageous sum of £1.6bn to acquire Jaguar - and there was not exactly a queue of buyers lining up outside BAe's door. In truth, Rover was barely profitable and then only because of the performance of the Land Rover-Range Rover business which masked heavy losses in Rover's main car division.

At the time, however, Bernd Piescher, the BMW chairman, preferred to speak mistily of resurrecting the Riley and Wolseley marques while Rover executives confidently predicted that there would be no loss of identity on the grounds that "when you have a fine claret and a fine burgundy you do not mix them in the same glass".

Well, it has taken a little over two years for the party to end, the hangover to set in and BMW to reach for the Alfa Romeo. After leaving Rover largely to its own devices, the Germans are, like a rash, suddenly all over Longbridge and Cowley. It is easy to see why if you subscribe to the view of John Lawson at Salomon Brothers. He says Rover has some of the worst production economics of any European car maker, a range which is ageing more quickly than most of its counterparts and a model replacement programme which could soak up £3bn in the next six years and still leave

it trailing in the wake of even the much-maligned Renault.

While the analysis might be extreme, at least some of it must reflect the concerns being aired in Munich. Rover's production lines may be flexible. But to be making only 10 models yet using eight different platforms, when VW will be turning out seven times as many cars on half the number of platforms has to be the economics of the madhouse.

It has taken Ford seven years and some fearful accumulated losses to begin making headway at Jaguar. BMW looks to be at the start of an equally long and difficult road. Mr Lawson says it will depress its share price by 15 per cent for the foreseeable future. One thing is certain, the pain will be felt as much in the Midlands as Munich.

Selling British Energy at any price

Another day, another minor humiliation for what looks, mercifully, like being the last big privatisation for the foreseeable future. Tucked away in the prospectus for the British Energy flotation is a fascinating little paragraph which just about sums up the lengths to which ministers were prepared to go to get this one away.

We will not bore you with the legalese, nor the casual hutchery done to the English language in its drafting. Suffice it to say that this paragraph gave the international managers

syndicating the offer *carte blanche* to sell the shares to pretty much anyone they could find provided they were prepared to underwrite those bids and buy back the shares should they be sold within three months.

Now it is normal practice in privatisations for the Government and its advisers to ensure that the institutional book is of the highest quality. The last thing they want is investors of dubious pedigree shorting the offer or unloading stock in the immediate aftermath. Indeed the sanction usually handed around is to threaten to exclude any institution engaging in such behaviour from future privatisations.

In the case of British Energy, the Government and BZW were clearly concerned less about the provenance of the bidders and more about the colour of their money. Not that Cazeneuve or Capels would put fast money into the stock, you understand. But what about the other members of the syndicate? Sitting in Whitehall it is impossible to vet the credentials of every investor in southern Italy.

We are assured that the proportion of shares subject to this unusual underwriting arrangement was "not significant". But the arrangement still speaks volumes for the conduct of the sale as a whole. Perhaps it is just as well that the Treasury has nothing left in the cupboard to sell. Except of course the 12.5 per cent stake it is still left holding in British Energy even after doing everything it could think to offload the stock.

Economy: Rise in average earnings sparks fears of renewed inflation

Sharp fall in jobless rate signals pick-up in growth

CHRIS GODSMARK
Business Correspondent

Unemployment fell by a much bigger margin than expected last month, providing a boost for the Government and another sign that underlying economic growth may be picking up.

But economists feared that upward revisions to average earnings figures were an indication of inflationary pressures in the pipeline, reducing the chances of further cuts in interest rates.

The seasonally adjusted jobless total dropped by 24,100 in

July to 2,126,200, its lowest level since March 1991. The consensus forecast by City economists had been for a drop of around 14,000. The Office of National Statistics also said June's fall in unemployment at 16,000 was larger than the previous estimate of 14,300.

The unemployment rate last month was 7.6 per cent, though the male rate, at 10.3 per cent, compared with a rate for women of just 4.3 per cent. Government statisticians said July's fall, the highest since March, was out of line with the recent trend, with reductions in the

coming months expected at around 15,000.

Figures for unfilled vacancies at job centres were also buoyant, rising by 11,500 to 230,300, the highest number since January 1989.

Kevin Darlington, UK economist at stockbrokers Hoare Govett, said: "Unemployment continues to trickle down faster than anticipated. These figures give the distinct sense that behind the scenes the economy is more buoyant than perhaps other statistics are suggesting."

John Monks, general secretary of the TUC, pointed to re-

cent survey evidence showing a fall in the number of people employed. "The fall in claimant unemployment is welcome, but is not a reliable guide to what is really happening in the labour market. There is still no sign that the economy is generating more jobs."

The number of people out of work and claiming benefit in July fell in every region, though there were signs that the gap between north and south was opening up again. The highest reduction was in the South-east, where the rate stood at 7.1 per cent. The lowest unemployment rate was in East Anglia, at 5.8 per cent, while in the North the jobless total stood at 9.7 per cent.

There was less good news for the Government in the average earnings figures. The surprise fall reported in underlying average earnings growth in May, from 3.75 per cent to 3.5 per cent, had been revised back up yesterday in the statistics published yesterday. The new estimate for May was 3.75 per cent, with the same figure for June.

Economists differed over the significance of the revision. Claran Barr, from Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said: "Eddie is clearly saying that Ken Clarke will be taking a real chance if he tries to cut rates again. He will lose all credibility with the markets."

George steps up opposition to cut

The Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, stepped up his opposition to further interest rate cuts when he met Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, last month, writes Chris Godsmark.

Minutes of the meeting, published yesterday, the first since June's quarter-point rate reduction, revealed that the Governor advised "strongly against any further interest rate cut on the basis of the present evidence".

He told Mr Clarke that since the base rate cut, to 5.75 per cent, there had been nothing in

the economic figures to alter the Bank's view that rates should have remained at their previous level of 6 per cent.

In reality, Mr George explained, the reduction might have made matters worse, by putting the Government's inflation target at risk.

He said: "Last month's cut in interest rates would, in itself, have increased the risk to the inflation target. To that extent it may have brought forward the time when interest rates will need to rise."

In response, Mr Clarke, with mastery understatement, ad-

mitted that he and the Governor were "still slightly apart on the decision to cut rates". But he claimed there had been no difference of opinion in last month's meeting about the need to maintain rates at their current level.

Economists interpreted the minutes as further evidence of a tougher approach by the Bank. Claran Barr from Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said: "Eddie is clearly saying that Ken Clarke will be taking a real chance if he tries to cut rates again. He will lose all credibility with the markets."



Walking man: The headquarters of Munich Re which has made a US acquisition. Photograph: AP Photo/Frank Augstein

TOM STEVENSON
City Editor

Munich Re in \$3bn bid for US insurer

Munich Re, the world's largest reinsurance group, said yesterday it planned to acquire the third-ranked US reinsurer American Re for \$3.3bn, boosting the German group's share of the lucrative US market.

The Munich-based insurance giant said its \$65-per-share offer had the backing of the US firm's directors and its 64 per cent owner, investment firm Kohlberg Kravis Roberts. The takeover should be complete by

the year-end, it added. US authorities and minority shareholders have yet to approve the deal which Munich Re said was hammered out "in a matter of weeks". The offer price represents an 11 per cent premium to American's price before the announcement. The move would triple Mu-

nich Re's reinsurance business in the US, the world's highest insurance market. It comes amid growing demand for firms that offer reinsurance - the way insurers protect themselves from exposure to risk from policy claims. Analysts welcomed the acquisition as a long-term strate-

gic move but were concerned at the seemingly high price being paid.

"It's a pretty full price when earnings are approaching a cyclical peak. It also ignores any goodwill or amortisation," said Tom Bennett, analyst at Paribas Capital Markets.

Munich Re shares declined DM47.5 to DM13.535 on the news.

It said that its latest acquisition would increase premium income from reinsurance to DM22.5bn (£9.8bn) and overall income to DM37bn.

IN BRIEF

- City Centre Restaurants, the Deep Pan Pizza to Garfunkels group, closed 6p lower at 117p after announcing profits for the six months to June only 2.4 per cent higher at £6.41m. Restaurant costs knocked £870,000 off operating profits which were otherwise 13.5 per cent better than a year previously. James Naylor, chief executive, said that the second half year had started well.

- Conrad Ritblat, the property group which acquired Erdman Lewis in January, enjoyed a 47 per cent increase in fee income in the year to May. Profits rose £3 per cent to £2.07m before exceptional. John Ritblat, chairman, said: "We are now poised to take advantage of a marketplace which now looks healthier than it has for several years." Dividend rose 10 per cent to 6.32p.

- Independent Insurance, the property, marine and motor insurer, reported a 12 per cent rise in premium revenues from £207m to £232.7m in the six months to June. Chief executive Michael Bright said he was delighted by this performance in spite of continuing competition in the UK insurance market. Pre-tax profit, excluding investment gains rose 15 per cent to £16.7m while the dividend increased by the same margin to 5.3p (4.6p).

- Long Term Credit Bank of Japan has been fined \$1m by US federal and state regulators. It is believed to be one of the largest ever imposed in New York banking history, said the state bank- ing department, which said that it had discovered "numerous and pervasive internal control weaknesses and violations of banking law and regulations" relating to securities trading.

- The Bank of England welcomed a detailed report from the European Monetary Institute (EMI) on plans for a cross-border payment system for the single currency from 1999. The report describes the proposed Trans-European Automated Real-Time Gross Settlement Express Transfer system, otherwise known as TARGET. This "should assist banks to prepare for a single currency whether the UK is in or out," the Bank said.

- Hoechst pre-tax profits rose 103 per cent in the first half of 1996, mainly due to the sales of two subsidiaries. Hoechst reported a first-half pre-tax profit of DM2.1bn (£917m), which included a DM1.8bn from the sale of its stakes in SGL Carbon, a carbon and graphite manufacturer and Uhde, a plant construction company. Sales fell 1 per cent, to DM26.1bn, which the company attributed mainly to the rise in the dollar against the mark.

- Novo Nordisk, the Danish drugs and biotechnology group, posted better than expected interim profits, boosted by solid sales increases and an improved product mix in core health care and enzyme operations. Net profit rose by 16 per cent to 873m crowns (£98.45m) while sales were 2 per cent higher at 7.05bn crowns.

- Lombard said that it may seek to revive the merger of its platinum interests with Impala Platinum if the European Commission reverses its veto of the deal on anti-competitive grounds. Impala has appealed against the decision, but Lombard has European joined the process. It says that talks with Brussels on European platinum sales should be conducted by the world's two largest platinum producers, Anglo American and Gencor, which owns a majority stake in Impala Platinum.

Gehe set to renew bid for Lloyds Chemists

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Gehe, the German pharmaceutical wholesaler, yesterday gave the firmest indication yet that it was ready to renew its bid for Lloyds Chemists. The group and rival bidders UniChem were last month given qualified approval by the British competition authorities to go ahead with their offers, subject to the sale of most of Lloyds' wholesale depots.

Speaking in London yesterday, Karl-Gerhard Eick, Gehe's finance director, said: "We are trying to fulfil the remedies [demanded by the Department of Trade and Industry] in order to come up with the next bid. We hope this can happen faster than the deadline of 18 October. It is not only in our hands, but also those of the OFT."

Gehe must satisfy the Office of Fair Trading that it has reached heads of agreement to sell seven of Lloyds' 10 warehouses by the October deadline.

Mr Eick said a "fair number" of potential buyers had come forward, most of them existing drug wholesalers in the UK.

But he warned that both the requirement to sell the operations and Lloyds' recent profit warning would affect the value of the business. "It is strange if you have to sell a business and find buyers for a business you really don't know. We have not had time to do due diligence." The seven warehouses had a turnover of between £130m and £140m, on which a normal margin of around 2 per cent was expected, he said. That implies the businesses could be valued at anywhere from £20m to over £40m to Gehe, Mr Eick suggested, although he stressed that, given their poor recent performance, the operations would be sold for much less. Other sources have suggested they may fetch less than £5m.

Last month's warning by Lloyds that second-half profits

would be hit by uncertainty surrounding the bid "has to have an influence on the question of valuation", Mr Eick said, although he added that it was "not a logical consequence that that changes the bid price". Much would depend on the attitude of UniChem.

UniChem hinted strongly yesterday that it was ready to renew its bid at close to the original price. It said that, after two years of scrutiny, Lloyds' strategic value to the group remained the same. "We had always taken the view that we would have had to make disposals of wholesale depots and we factored this into our original thinking."

The group is thought to have had around 25 expressions of interest for the six warehouses it is being forced to sell by the DTI. Gehe revealed that AAHL, its British wholesale and retail operation with which Lloyds would be merged, had lifted operating profits by 48 per cent to £24.5m in the six months to June.

Mortgage costs at 20-year low

Homes are now more affordable than at any time in almost twenty years, a report for the TSB bank claimed yesterday. Buyers throughout Britain typically spend £25.40 every month on a mortgage out of every £100 they take home, according to the TSB's Affordability Index.

That figure is based on data for the second quarter of the year, and compares with £30.90 for the corresponding three-month period last year, representing a drop of 18 per cent. TSB, which believes homes

have not been so affordable since 1978, reckons the cost of servicing a mortgage will fall to its lowest level by Christmas when homeowners will spend an estimated £25.20 on their loans.

But a probable 1 per cent interest rate increase and gradually rising house prices could see that figure rise to £29.10 by the end of next year.

TSB's mortgage marketing manager Steve Lowe said: "This is excellent news for would-be homeowners planning to move in the next few months. And it could even act as a trigger for those

people considering a move in the near future."

John Stewart, an independent housing analyst who compiles the TSB Index, said: "The combination of April's tax cuts, lower mortgage rates and faster average earnings growth have helped improve affordability over the past few months. These factors have been more than enough to outweigh the negative impact of a slight increase in house prices."

"And we're likely to enjoy the benefits in terms of affordability until at least the end of the year."

SBC hails 'excellent' Warburg first half

JOHN WILLCOCK

Swiss Bank Corporation claimed yesterday that the integration of British investment bank SG Warburg had been successfully completed, as the Swiss group unveiled first-half earnings up 34 per cent due to higher commission and trading income.

SBC refused to supply separate figures for Warburg, which it bought in the spring of last year. While integration of the securities operations has gone well, many of Warburg's leading corporate finance people have left, and some corporate clients have also defected.

"It's been difficult for some people to reconcile themselves to the fact that UK corporate advice and finance, while important, isn't so important if you look at SBC as a whole," said one source. Analysts say that SBC took an aggressive line to the integration.

SBC chief financial officer Peter Wuffli said Warburg's first-half performance was "excellent". He said that the British merchant bank had met the goals set at the time of the acquisition, although these were not specified yesterday.

The smallest of Switzerland's big three banks said net profit rose to SF72m (£388m), at the lower end of estimates, from SF54.4m last time.

Last week Union Bank of Switzerland - the country's biggest bank - posted a 33 per cent net profit increase for a period that analysts have called the most turbulent six months in Swiss banking history.

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business

BICC is still turning that corner

The switch-back share price of BICC over the past five years reflects the number of times hopes have been dashed that the cables and construction group might at last have turned the corner. Optimism is now riding on prospects that Alan Jones of Westland, who arrived as chief executive last year, is at last sorting things out. The latest interim figures suggest the group's recovery has a long way to go, despite the enthusiasm of the market in pushing the shares 5p higher to 320p yesterday.

Profits before exceptional items edged up £3m to £63m in the six months to June, leaving underlying earnings per share fractionally higher at 6.5p (6.5p). The real disappointment lay in a further swathe of exceptional items and provisions after last year's whopping £127m write-off, which looked like a kitchen sink job at the time. BICC is taking a further £65m of exceptional charges, of which the German cables business accounts for £25m and most of the remainder relates to a belated act of realism about the development site in London's Spitalfields, cutting its value to just £30m.

To be fair, Mr Jones hinted strongly at the time of the full-year results in February that Germany would require further action in view of deteriorating market conditions in the wake of a price war there. Following the decision to get out of cable for the building industry, the knife is being taken to the retained high-voltage power cable operation. That should boost margins and there is welcome news that the market is showing signs of stabilising after the recent action to reduce capacity by the big players, which as well as BICC include Alcatel and Siemens.

There is scope for optimism that Mr Jones can deliver on his aim to raise return on capital in cables to 20 per cent. Action taken so far was predominantly responsible for lifting profits from BICC Cables, which groups operations in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, from £37m to £51m. Meanwhile, the consolidation and refocusing of the North American business saw underlying profits rise from £6m to £8m, when stock gains and losses are ignored.

More of a question mark hangs over BICC's ability to revitalise Balfour Beatty in the forecast 18 months. Stripping out a maiden contribution of around £9m from three British Rail track maintenance operations acquired in April, there was a loss in the region of £8m in the half-year. Success in winning private finance initiative projects and management changes will not be sufficient in themselves to do the trick while markets remain so difficult.

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

Mr Jones is doing a decent job, but circumstances remain against him. Pre-exceptional profits of £134m this year would put the shares on a forward multiple of 20, which is pretty demanding.

Glynwed rescued by acquisition

Thank goodness for Victaulic, the plastic pipes and fittings group that Glynwed acquired a year ago for £150m. Without its £8.3m contribution in the half-year to June, the Aga stove to metal processing group's interim figures would have looked even more disappointing.

Victaulic's profits limited the damage at the pre-tax profits line to a 3.1 per cent decline from £41.5m to £40.2m but there was a price to pay. Earnings per share, the more important measure of course, emerged 17 per cent lower at 10.99p (13.23p) as the profits were spread more thinly over an enlarged share register.

The problem with Glynwed is that despite its best efforts it remains wed-

ded to the UK and German economies and especially their consumer and construction industries. The Victaulic acquisition added a slug of less cyclical utility pipework but the group is more dependent than it might admit on a marked upturn in the general economy.

It is also a victim of, and unable to control, the volatile metals price cycle. The price of stainless steel last month dipped below the previous low for the metal struck in January 1994. Aluminium has also been on a downward trend for more than a year. That led to a 6 per cent reduction in turnover from the division and a halving in profits to £6.1m.

That took the shine off Pipe Systems, which benefited from the inclusion of Victaulic to see sales rise 84 per cent to £182.5m and profits up a handy 49 per cent to £15.8m. It is now second only in profit terms to the metal processing arm, which chipped in a broadly unchanged £17.1m as the mix of business changed to higher-margin steel work.

The last of Glynwed's four divisions (down from six as part of an ongoing attempt to refocus the group into growth areas) was a curate's egg. While

consumer items such as cookers and sinks grew strongly, the demand for drainage systems, covers and gratings, especially in Germany, was weak.

Full year forecasts emerged from yesterday's quite heavy downgrades at about £85m this year and £96m next. The recovery will come eventually, but in the meantime a prospective price/earnings multiple of 14, at 332p, falling to 12 is high enough.

MAID is worth waiting for

MAID has always been the ultimate jam tomorrow stock, investing heavily for a pay-off later. Now, just as the supplier of on-line information and research looks to be fulfilling its promise, there is talk of takeover. Potential predators include Reuters and Reed-Elsevier, though any takeover would need to be agreed by founder Dan Wagner and the other directors, who control around 40 per cent of the shares between them.

MAID has a highly regarded product but is a relatively small player in a market being scrapped over by giants. Rivals include Reuters, Dow Jones, Reed Elsevier's Lexis-Nexis and Knight Ridder's Dialog, to name a few. These companies have deep pockets but their systems lack some of the refinements of MAID's higher-price service which supplies business information such as newspaper cuttings and market research to its subscribers. MAID has a head start, the challenge is to make that count.

The crock of gold is the huge US market, which is where MAID is investing heavily. It was largely expansion across the Atlantic that caused it to slip to a pre-tax loss of £1.9m in the second quarter compared to profits of £197,000 in the same period last year.

MAID now has 11 US offices, of which seven have opened this year. Some 1,200 new corporate subscribers were signed up in the second half, of which two-thirds came on stream in the second quarter, more than forecast.

MAID has already signed partnership deals with manufacturers like IBM and service providers such as CompuServe. Other deals are likely with cable and telephone companies or even manufacturers of hand-held computers such as Psion. Internet growth will also help.

Losses of £5m are predicted this year before bouncing back to profits of £3.5m the year after. The shares finished 3p higher at 271p yesterday, capping a good, if volatile, run since flotation at the beginning of 1994. If you can stand the ups and downs, hold on.

Swiss banking culture affects Warburg's results

CITY DIARY

JOHN WILLCOCK

I received a startling phone call from SBC Warburg's press office in London yesterday. "Just to say that SBC Warburg's results are out, but there won't be any separate breakdown of Warburg's activities, either in the figures or on the phone."

Um, right. It seems like only yesterday when SBC Warburg's old annual report would slam on to the desk, a good half an inch thick. Before it was taken over by Marcel Ospel and his Swiss gnomes, Warburg's results were illustrated by countless graphs and pages of script. No longer. Warburg merited just three lines in SBC's half-year results announcement.

It is as if the whole history of financial reporting by investment banks is going into reverse, with less and less being revealed. Perhaps next year SBC's executive chairman in the UK, Hans de Gier, will be denying it owns a British bank at all.

Everyone knows what a mess the British phone system has got into over the spiralling number of phone numbers required. One suggestion has been to give everyone their own portable number which they can take with them whenever they move.

The British Chambers of Commerce, no less, expected to be able to do just this when it moved its headquarters recently just 400 yards down Victoria Street in London to new offices.

BT said no; the BCC would have to get new numbers. It had been in Westminster

Granada recently unveiled proposals for a series of new television programmes, including one on cooking. Not to be outdone, Carlton then trumpeted its own cooking programmes to be hosted by well-known telly chefs. Granada has hit back, saying: "It's a useful thing to own Forte, which employs Nico de Chez Nico fame and Marco Pierre White."

Analysts take notice. Obviously there were synergies between Granada and Forte, after all. Hang on, Granada also owns Little Chef and Happy Eater. "And now, a new series of fried breakfasts..."



Hans de Gier: Results at SBC Warburg have been downgraded

ster, now it was in Pimlico, a different phone district. In vain did the BCC protest that Pimlico is itself in Westminster. Now that's how to keep customers happy.

A colleague has just received an exciting brochure inviting him to "the global business event of the century," a seminar featuring Tom "Peter Principle" Peters, Dr Stephen "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" Covey and Peter "Fifth Discipline" Senge, three of the biggest selling business authors ever.

This sounds great, thought my colleague. An opportunity to meet these prophets face to face and discuss ideas with them. Until he read the small print: "A world-wide interactive satellite seminar..."

At the back of the four-page brochure it transpires

that in order to enjoy this event, beamed to 40 nations and 30,000 people, you will have to attend the National Motorcycle Museum in Birmingham. The three gurus will be beamed by satellite from Lexington, Kentucky. To discuss "how to make your team UNSTOPPABLE!"

Peter Jarvis, group chief executive of Whitbread, must be pleased as punch. His Mackeson Stout has just won gold medals at the World Beer Cup and the World Beer Championships.

So forget Atlanta. The 200-year-old recipe, brewed in Sarnesbury, Lancashire, has succeeded where so many athletes failed, and has just been launched in the US.

In contrast to the mighty Guinness, Mackeson tastes quite sweet, which Mike Morris, Whitbread's export director, thinks is an advantage: "Sweet drinks are popular in a number of diverse countries and Mackeson provides a very full flavour which is enjoyed around the world." Make mine a pint.

GRAND PRIX '96 RACE SCHEDULE

Belgian GP

August 25

Italian GP

September 8

Portuguese GP

September 22

Japanese GP

October 13

Overall Top 50 Dream Teams

Fifty teams are in joint 1st position with 518 points

- 1 Jumpin' Jacks
- 1 Billie Racing
- 1 Maddisons
- 1 Crisp One
- 1 The Pits
- 1 Pippa's Pole
- 1 Positioners
- 1 AJ A Carte
- 1 The Forty One's
- 1 GRI
- 1 Elfultha
- 1 KBS Team
- 1 Lightning
- 1 Geecezar!
- 1 Equinox
- 1 Sherbie's Stars
- 1 Farrahs
- 1 Sky Clad
- 1 Gordy's GB
- 1 Mino's Marauders
- 1 Herb's Flyers
- 1 Dan's Reckless Racers
- 1 Tony's Omega One
- 1 Robin I
- 1 The Pilkington Formula I
- 1 Catch Me Out
- 1 Slickley Formula I
- 1 French Flyers
- 1 Peanjuree
- 1 Panville
- 1 The Dare Devils
- 1 Dream Machines
- 1 They Think It's All Over FI
- 1 Kwest International
- 1 Wright Off
- 1 Harvey
- 1 God's Son
- 1 Bisland's Bangers
- 1 I'm Alright Jacques
- 1 Reliant
- 1 Southern Sharks 3
- 1 The Tiger Hobbes Team
- 1 Bino One
- 1 They Who Dare
- 1 Charlie's Choice
- 1 DSC
- 1 Petrol Heads
- 1 Ward's Wonders
- 1 Bourbon
- 1 Red Rose Racing
- 1 Formula Fantastic
- 1 Tamar Racing

FORMULA 1 DREAM TEAM

The latest scores and results

So Damon Hill was denied maximum points again because of yet another dodgy start, while his Williams team-mate, Jacques Villeneuve, recorded his third victory of the season.

While it was a good weekend for those patriotic Dream Team managers who have backed the constructors' champions Williams-Renault, British drivers fared less well. David Coulthard parked his McLaren early following an engine seizure after Martin Brundle was the first to retire when he ran wide on lap six, and Johnny Herbert saw his promising weekend come to an end when his Sauber's Ford V10 engine gave out.

Northern Ireland's Eddie Irvine found the difficulties at Ferrari continue when the old gearbox failure problem returned to haunt him. His team-mate, the defending champion Michael Schumacher, also failed to get in the points yet again when he ground to a halt on the 71st lap. The Prancing Horse stable promised much at the start of the season, and any Dream Team managers relying on them for chassis or engine points will be looking enviously at their colleagues who stuck with the tried and tested options of Williams and Benetton.

Another podium finish for one of last season's Formula One drivers, Jean Alesi, will have pleased his supporters, while Mika Hakkinen, Olivier Panis and Rubens Barrichello also picked up valuable points.

DRIVER OF THE DAY: JACQUES VILLENEUVE

Despite losing 10 seconds on his final stop while in the lead, Jacques Villeneuve managed to exit the pits still ahead of his Williams team-mate, Damon Hill, pipping him to the chequered flag by less than a second.

It is sometimes hard to remember that this is the 25-year-old Canadian's first year in Formula One, and despite his lack of familiarity with the Hungarian, he drove a measured and impressive race. With no team orders at Williams this season, Hill must surely feel Villeneuve's hot breath on his neck as only 17 points separate the two, with 40 still on offer.



Jacques Villeneuve (far right) celebrates his victory in Hungary

WIN a drive in a grand prix car

The Dream Team manager with the highest number of points at the end of the Grand Prix Championship season will win our top prize - a drive in a 650bhp F1 car.

You will be flown to the AGS team's training school in the south of France for the most exhilarating experience of your life. The school specialises in F1 courses and provides all the racewear and instruction you will need for a day driving F1 and other single seat cars.

INDIVIDUAL GRAND PRIX PRIZES STILL TO BE WON
You can enter our Formula 1 Dream Team game at any time during the grand prix season. Even if you don't win our top prize, don't worry, there are still prizes to be won with each grand prix race. Enter for the Belgian Grand Prix and you could win a trip to the Italian Grand Prix. Get The Independent on Wednesday 21 or Thursday 22 August for details on how to register.

HUNGARIAN GRAND PRIX PRIZE WINNER
Congratulations to Jo Smith from London and her team Another Nail Biting Finish. She has won exclusive membership to Team McLaren.

Grand Prix Shopping List

DRIVERS	POINTS	CHASSIS	POINTS
1 M Schumacher	16	40 Benetton	16
2 J Alesi	16	41 Williams	20
3 D Hill	26	42 Ferrari	0
4 G Berger	1	43 McLaren	13
5 D Coulthard	-1	44 Sauber	0
6 E Irvine	3	45 Jordan	9
7 J Villeneuve	31	46 Ligier	0
8 M Hakkinen	18	47 Tyrrell	0
9 H H Frenzen	0	48 Arrows	-2
10 M Brundle	-3	49 Minardi	0
11 R Barrichello	18	50 Forti	-12
12 J Herbert	0		
13 M Salo	-5		
14 P Larri	0		
15 P Diniz	-4		
16 U Katajama	7		
17 J Verstappen	-2		
18 O Panis	18		
19 L Badoer	0		
20 R Rosset	10		
21 A Montemini	0		
22 G Fisichella	0		
23 V Sospiri	0		
24 T Marques	0		
25 F Lagorce	0		
26 N Noda	0		
27 T Inoue	0		
28 M Blundell	0		
29 J-C Boulignon	0		
30 K Brack	0		
31 K Bart	0		
32 E Collard	0		
33 N Fontana	0		
34 D Franchitti	0		
35 N Larini	0		
36 J Magnussen	0		
37 A Prost	0		
38 G Tarquini	0		
39 K Wendlinger	0		

سكرا من الاجل

Clarke's recovery has all the signs of old-fashioned boom

Economists have a strong herd instinct, and none more so than economic forecasters. Their desire to stay close to their fellows far outweighs their memory of the recent past.

It is easy to spot this tendency by looking down the list of forecasts published each month by the Treasury. The consensus prediction for 1997 is a 3.2 per cent increase in GDP. Only three out of 44 growth forecasts lie more than 0.5 percentage points away from 3.2 per cent in either direction and only eight are more than 0.3 points away.

Yet there is an increasingly strong case that the UK economy is heading for something that looks a lot more like a good old-fashioned boom than a steady, sustainable recovery – and not even a mini-boom but a maxi-boom. The two have souls who have predictions of 4 per cent growth and above in 1997 – Tim Congdon at Lombard Street Research and Paul Turnbull at Merrill Lynch – are looking increasingly precise. Unlike most of the others, they have remembered the rule that the economy is never as well behaved as the forecasts.

For proof that booms always come as a surprise, there is no need to look any further back than 1994. In January of that year the consensus forecast was that the economy would expand by 2.5 per cent, driven by consumer spending and investment. All agreed it would be a better year than 1993. As it turned out, growth was actually 4.1 per cent. The granddaddy of recent booms



ECONOMIC VIEW
DIANE COYLE

took place in 1988, of course. The Treasury had one of the highest growth forecasts for the year, at 3 per cent. The actual outcome was a 5 per cent leap in GDP. (The fact that the Treasury team had done better than most other economists did little to preserve it from criticism of its forecasting record, just as the fact that the Bank of England's record on forecasting inflation has been slightly better than average is currently not deflecting the myth that it is unduly pessimistic.)

It is a fair bet a chunk of the windfall cash will show in consumer spending

Economist David Mackie at City investment bank JP Morgan has compared the 1990s with the Maudling boom in the 1960s, the Barber boom in the 1970s and the Lawson boom in the 1980s.

The parallels – hinted at by the charts – make quite a compelling case for suspecting that the Clarke boom is in the making. The common threads are loose monetary and fiscal policy, increasing demand for exports and financial liberalisation.

Take macro-economic policy first. Base rates fell 3 percentage points from their peak in 1962-63, 2.5 points in 1971-72, 2 points in 1985-86.

This time around they have fallen only 1 point from their peak in the preceding 12-18 months.

On the other hand, the Government's tax and spending policy is far more relaxed. The budget deficit ranged between 1.6 and 5.8 per cent of GDP during the Barber boom, and 1.1 and 2.8 per cent under Mr Lawson, as he then was. Mr Clarke's

deficits have run at 5.1 per cent of GDP in 1995 and a probable 4.5 per cent this year and 4 per cent next year.

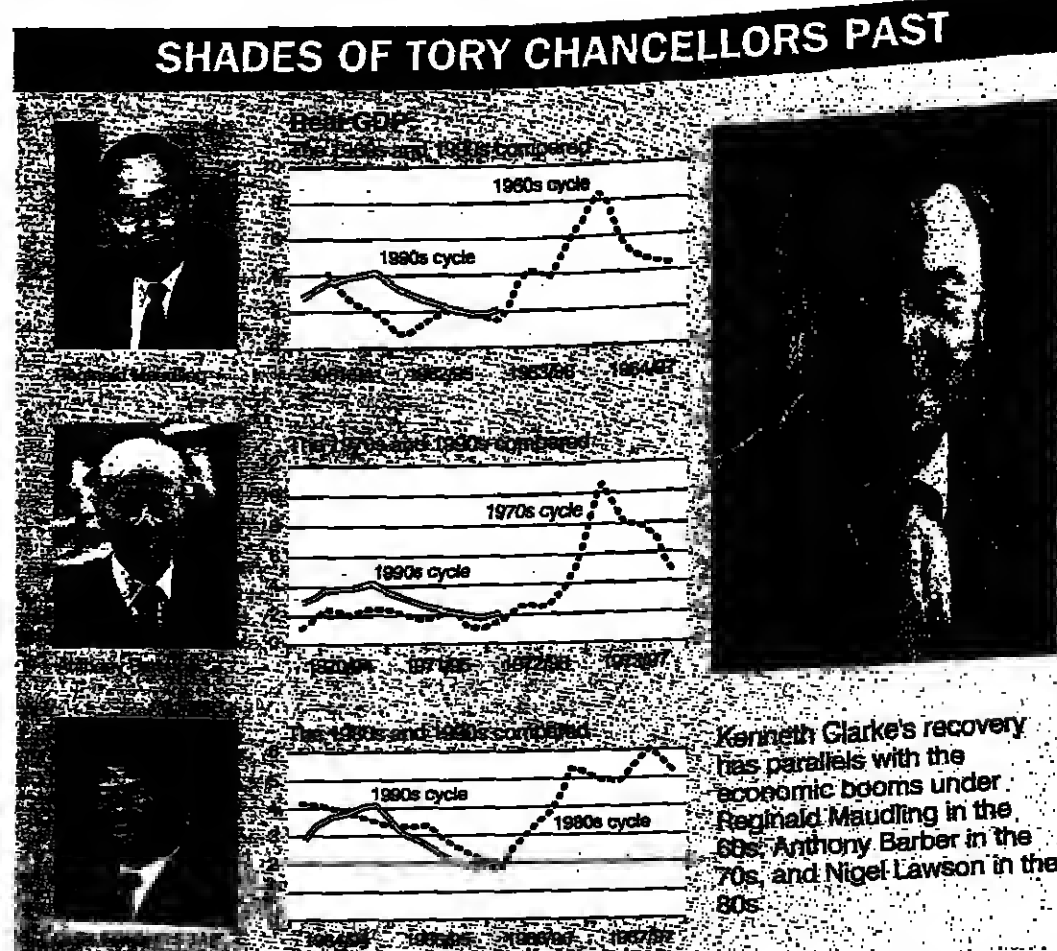
The external environment matters, too. World trade grew rapidly in the early 1980s and early 70s. In the mid-1980s export markets were more subdued but a fall in the pound before Britain joined the exchange rate mechanism improved competitiveness. There is no question that that exports have weakened

significantly along with the slow-down in key markets such as Germany. But most forecasters expect them to pick up next year. The consensus has export growth rising from 4.5 per cent this year to 5.6 per cent next.

On the face of it there is little comparison with the financial deregulation that took place during the earlier episodes. Hire purchase restrictions were lifted in the early Sixties, boosting sales of consumer durables. This was when many households got their televisions and vacuum cleaners. The next decade brought a kind of direct controls on bank lending. In the 1980s indirect controls on lending and direct foreign exchange controls were ended, and housing societies' lending became less restricted.

However, there is an equivalent move now with the conversion of many of the building societies into banks. Not only will they have more freedom over their loans policy, it is putting £16bn (Mr Mackie's latest estimate) directly into the hands of consumers. This will take the form of shares but will be easily saleable. If only half of it is spent, it will add nearly 2 per cent to consumer spending.

Some commentators have argued that the money – along with maturing Texas and the west coast – will not be spent because people treat wealth windfalls differently from income windfalls. There is something in this, but many also regard spending money on consumer durables as different



Kenneth Clarke's recovery has parallels with the economic booms under Reginald Maudling in the 60s, Anthony Barber in the 70s, and Nigel Lawson in the 80s.

from spending on food or clothes. It is a fair bet a chunk of the windfall money will show up in consumer spending, used to buy dishwashers, computers and ovens.

With all the conditions in place, the evidence of an impending boom is building up.

Retail sales and consumer expenditure have started to accelerate, helped along by this year's tax cuts, the biggest one-off boost to spending power since the late 1980s.

Only a few idealists believe there will be no further income tax cuts in November's Budget. Low mortgage rates have set house prices rising at an annualised rate of 10 per cent on average across the country and far more in parts of London and the South-east. Unemployment continues its trend decline and businesses have started to report skill shortages. Even Britain's forlorn manufacturing sector is edging towards a recovery.

It will not be long before all the classic signs of economic froth such as gaudy, mini-skirts and new electronic accessories make a re-appearance.

Of course, the world might be different this time around. We might be set for the "Clarke steady recovery" rather than the "Clarke boom". But to count on it would be to forget British economic history – as most of the economic forecasters seem to be doing.

Foreign Exchange Rates

Currency	Spot	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
US	1.5505	1.54	1.53	1.52	1.51
Canada	2.1006	2.09	2.08	2.07	2.06
Germany	2.2300	2.22	2.21	2.20	2.19
France	7.2611	7.25	7.24	7.23	7.22
Italy	2.0650	2.06	2.05	2.04	2.03
Japan	167.80	167.70	167.60	167.50	167.40
ECU	1.2233	1.22	1.21	1.20	1.19
Belgium	47.88	47.8	47.7	47.6	47.5
Netherlands	8.9696	8.96	8.95	8.94	8.93
Denmark	2.5899	2.58	2.57	2.56	2.55
Ireland	0.6820	0.68	0.67	0.66	0.65
Norway	8.6433	8.64	8.63	8.62	8.61
Spain	165.20	165.1	165.0	164.9	164.8
Sweden	2.027	2.02	2.01	2.00	1.99
Switzerland	1.9876	1.98	1.97	1.96	1.95
Australia	1.9895	1.98	1.97	1.96	1.95
Hong Kong	1.021	1.02	1.01	1.00	0.99
New Zealand	2.2897	2.28	2.27	2.26	2.25
Saudi Arabia	5.854	5.85	5.84	5.83	5.82
Singapore	2.893	2.89	2.88	2.87	2.86

Other Spot Rates

Country	Spot	Dollar
Argentina	15480	0.0087
Australia	1.9895	0.5047
Brazil	15705	0.0028
Canada	2.1006	0.4463
Denmark	2.5899	0.3905
France	7.2611	0.1366
Germany	2.2300	0.4536
Greece	367.90	0.0027
India	56.75	0.0168
Italy	2.0650	0.4167
Japan	167.80	0.0059
Korea	110.00	0.0091
Malaysia	3.8000	0.2667
Netherlands	8.9696	0.1125
Norway	8.6433	0.1250
Portugal	200.00	0.0050
Spain	165.20	0.0061
Sweden	2.027	0.2000
Switzerland	1.9876	0.5000
Taiwan	24.50	0.0417
UK	1.0000	1.0000
USA	1.0000	1.0000

Forward rates quoted high to low are at a discount; subtract from spot rate; rates quoted low to high are at a premium; add to spot rate.

*Dollar rates quoted as reciprocals.

For the latest forward rates call 0201 323 3033.

Cable cost 30p per minute (cheap rate) 40p other times.

Interest Rates

UK	Germany	US	Japan
Bank of England	Discount	Prime	Discount
Bank of France	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Italy	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Netherlands	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Belgium	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Denmark	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Sweden	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Switzerland	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Norway	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Korea	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Malaysia	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Singapore	Discount	Discount	Discount
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Bank of Luxembourg	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Madagascar	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Maldives	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Mali	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Mauritania	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Mauritius	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Mexico	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Mongolia	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Morocco	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Mozambique	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Myanmar	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Nepal	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Nicaragua	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Niger	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Nigeria	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Oman	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Pakistan	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Panama	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Paraguay	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Peru	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Philippines	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Poland	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Portugal	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Romania	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Russia	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Rwanda	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Saudi Arabia	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Senegal	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Sierra Leone	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Slovakia	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Slovenia	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of South Africa	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of South Korea	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Spain	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Sri Lanka	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Suriname	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Swaziland	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Sweden	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Switzerland	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Taiwan	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Tajikistan	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Tanzania	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Thailand	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Timor-Leste	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Togo	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Tonga	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Trinidad and Tobago	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Tunisia	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Turkey	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Turkmenistan	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Uganda	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Ukraine	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Uzbekistan	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Vanuatu	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Venezuela	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Vietnam	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Wales	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of West Bank and Gaza	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Yemen	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Zambia	Discount	Discount	Discount
Bank of Zimbabwe	Discount	Discount	Discount

Bond Yields

Country	1 year	2 year	3 year	5 year	10 year
US	7.1%	7.2%	7.3%	7.4%	7.5%
UK	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Germany	5.5%	5.6%	5.7%	5.8%	5.9%
France	5.5%	5.6%	5.7%	5.8%	5.9%
Italy	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Japan	5.5%	5.6%	5.7%	5.8%	5.9%
Canada	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Australia	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
New Zealand	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
South Africa	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Argentina	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Brazil	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Canada	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Chile	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Colombia	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Costa Rica	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Cuba	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Czech Republic	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Dominican Republic	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Ecuador	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
El Salvador	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Guatemala	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Honduras	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Hungary	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Iceland	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
India	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Indonesia	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Israel	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Jamaica	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Kazakhstan	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Kenya	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Kuwait	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Kyrgyzstan	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Laos	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Latvia	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Lithuania	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Luxembourg	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Madagascar	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Maldives	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Mali	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Mauritania	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Mauritius	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Mexico	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Mongolia	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Morocco	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Mozambique	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Myanmar	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Nepal	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Nicaragua	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Niger	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Nigeria	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Oman	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Pakistan	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Panama	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Paraguay	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Peru	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Philippines	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Poland	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Portugal	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Romania	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Russia	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Rwanda	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Saudi Arabia	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Senegal	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Sierra Leone	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Slovakia	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Slovenia	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
South Africa	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
South Korea	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Spain	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
Sri Lanka	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	6.5%	6.6%	6.7%	6.8%	6.9%

French prize no soft option

Dettori criticised over 'tender ride' on Pigeon

If the criminal profession of burglary takes your swag bag, August can be a tricky month in Paris. You may have to join the queue of figures wearing black and white hooded shirts which leads from the capital's swankier residences.

Paris is a desertion in high summer and the moveable feast ends for many, and just about all racing aficionados, in the Normandy spa of Deauville.

Since its creation in 1864 by the Duc de Nemours, Deauville's month-long race meeting has gained in prestige, and it is now the place to liberate the glad rags and give the poodle a good shampoo and blow dry.

There is something quintessentially French and smooth about the place. The track level the strand each daybreak as the horses come out to exercise, the huge, spangled casino waits to gobble up any funds that might survive the racecourse, and Omar Sharif is always around to share a hand of bridge or an aperitif at Le Drakkar. It could be, though, that the natives would trade all this rich ambi-

Richard Edmondson previews the Prix Jacques Le Marois

ence for a packet of soggy fish and chips and a plastic policeman's helmet rather than surrender their racing jewel, the Prix Jacques Le Marois, to the marauders from Britain.

The visitors tend to prefer this arena to a drizzly night on the all-weather and more probably spend the first days of Deauville, our boys are always easy to spot in Normandy by their trousers. They verge between Paul Cole (too short) and Clive Brittain (too fared).

Clive is lucky to still be around as he produced the greatest insult a Frenchman can receive - the sort of action that gets you run out of town by a gang carrying torches - when he had the nerve to win the Group One race with Sayedat three years ago. The mare was perilously close in the subsequent two runnings, finishing runner-up on each occasion, but Clive has had enough of getting his pants singed and declines to have a representative in this afternoon's running.

Britain's hopes in the mile race lie with Charnwood Forest (if you are happy to accept that a Dublin owner and trainer, plus an Italian jockey makes him British) and Gothenberg, who does not sound particularly Anglo-Saxon either.

Lanfranco Dettori, who got his domestic score rolling again after injury at Salisbury yesterday, partners Charnwood Forest for the first time and seems to have a tough job ahead of him. The ground is described as being on the soft side and if it got any worse the Godolphin runner might just travel for the day. On the other hand, if he is happy when wading, however, the colt who will be managed by Mark Johnston and Jason Weaver may be found wanting for quality.

The favourites to keep the prize at home are Sensation, Spinning World and Shaanxi. The first-named will be ridden by Michael Kinane, who could probably get himself on the favourite in the Pampala ball world, while Spinning World will be joined by Cash Assmusen. Victory for Spinning World would probably be the most satisfying for the romanticists as he is sent forth by the Niarcho Family. The family is now without its godfather, as Stavros Niarcho, the Greek shipping magnate who won three of the previous five runnings, is no longer with us.

Shaanxi is owned by Teruya Yoshida, who rather likes to hear post-race debriefings in his mother Japanese tongue. Yoshida is well-known as an employer of Yutaka Take, whose effigy is still punctured at Peter Chapple-Hyam's yard, but here he relies on a different countryman, Masayoshi Ebina.

Ebina is closing in on 500 winners and bows to only two other riders in eastern Japan. The 27-year-old has again collected high races this year, without resorting to any sort of roughness. He is a dual winner of the Fair Play Trophy for the jockey who incurs least penalties during the season. Fair play, for the French this afternoon, will be leaving the Prix Jacques Le Marois behind in Deauville.

Eric Gadsden, the owner of Cape Pigeon, yesterday heavily criticised Frankie Dettori's performance on his horse when it finished third at Windsor on Monday. The winner of the race was Talabart - Walter Swinburn's comeback ride.

Dettori took the 11-year-old to the front from the start of the Royal Bank of Scotland Handicap but appeared to be easy on his mount after being headed by the winner over a furlong from the finish.

After Cape Pigeon had finished beaten a length and a short-head, the stewards called upon Dettori to explain his actions but accepted his account that the gelding had had no more to give in the closing stages.

Gadsden, however, is far from satisfied and has threatened to bring to an end his activities as an owner. Cape Pigeon's trainer Gerald Cottrell said: "Having looked at the film, I think Mr Gadsden has a point. I think he gave the horse a tender ride over the last two



Dettori: trouble with owner

self returned from injury last Friday, rejected Gadsden's comments, saying: "I explained it to the stewards and they accepted my explanation, so he had better read the report. If I did anything wrong, I went too fast throughout the first part of the race."

The incident is not the first time that a "dream comeback" has been marred by controversy. Last October the Jockey Club looked into the victory of Jibreen - marking the return from serious injury of Declan Murphy - in a Flat versus jump jockeys challenge at Cheltenham.

Murphy was allowed to dictate the pace from the start of the seven-furlong race and was never challenged, landing some substantial bets in the process.

Having investigated the matter, the Club decided that no breach of the rules had been committed and took no further action. And yesterday its press officer John Mason ruled out further scrutiny of the Windsor race by the disciplinary committee.

DEAUVILLE

3.05 PRIX JACQUES LE MAROIS (Group 1) 1m (Straight) Penalty value £131,752

1	121-212	CHARNWOOD FOREST (G) 5m 500m 4.9.4	L. Dettori 7
2	21-131	GOETENBERG (G) 5m 500m 4.9.4	A. P. 8
3	108-70	SHANXI (G) 5m 500m 4.9.4	M. Johnston 9
4	414-414	LE TITON (G) 5m 500m 4.9.4	J. Weaver 10
5	403-10	GOETENBERG (G) 5m 500m 4.9.4	J. Weaver 11
6	221-11	GOETENBERG (G) 5m 500m 4.9.4	J. Weaver 12
7	11-321	SPINNING WORLD (G) 5m 500m 4.9.4	J. Weaver 13
8	112	ZARANDIA (G) 5m 500m 4.9.4	J. Weaver 14
9	111	SENSATION (G) 5m 500m 4.9.4	J. Weaver 15

SALISBURY

2.15 Stackatuck (nb) 4.15 Wizard King 4.45 Purple Fling 5.15 Intimation

1	215	Stackatuck (nb)	4.15
2	415	Wizard King	4.45
3	445	Purple Fling	5.15
4	515	Intimation	

2.45 VIOLET APPLIN CHALLENGE CUP HANDICAP (CLASS E) £4,200 added 1m 6f Penality Value £5,358

1	30025	SUPREMACY (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 7
2	24361	MURPHY (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	J. Weaver 8
3	10006	MURPHY (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	J. Weaver 9
4	00005	CRISTINA (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	J. Weaver 10
5	00005	MURPHY (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	J. Weaver 11
6	00005	MURPHY (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	J. Weaver 12
7	00005	MURPHY (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	J. Weaver 13
8	00005	MURPHY (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	J. Weaver 14
9	00005	MURPHY (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	J. Weaver 15

3.45 TOTE BOOKMAKERS HANDICAP (CLASS C) £8,000 added 1m 6f Penality Value £6,020

1	3121	20000	ALBION (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 7
2	10000	ALBION (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 8	
3	00000	ALBION (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 9	
4	00000	ALBION (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 10	
5	00000	ALBION (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 11	
6	00000	ALBION (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 12	
7	00000	ALBION (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 13	
8	00000	ALBION (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 14	
9	00000	ALBION (G) 1m 6f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 15	

4.45 FRESHWATER HANDICAP (CLASS D) £5,100 added 8f Penality Value £4,150

1	0120	CHERRY VALLEY (G) 8f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 7
2	00000	CHERRY VALLEY (G) 8f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 8
3	00000	CHERRY VALLEY (G) 8f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 9
4	00000	CHERRY VALLEY (G) 8f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 10
5	00000	CHERRY VALLEY (G) 8f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 11
6	00000	CHERRY VALLEY (G) 8f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 12
7	00000	CHERRY VALLEY (G) 8f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 13
8	00000	CHERRY VALLEY (G) 8f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 14
9	00000	CHERRY VALLEY (G) 8f 5.11.1	D. O'Connell 15

2.15 Stackatuck (nb) 4.15 Wizard King 4.45 Purple Fling 5.15 Intimation

GOING: Good to Firm. STALLS: 6/1m - 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th, 101st, 102nd, 103rd, 104th, 105th, 106th, 107th, 108th, 109th, 110th, 111th, 112th, 113th, 114th, 115th, 116th, 117th, 118th, 119th, 120th, 121st, 122nd, 123rd, 124th, 125th, 126th, 127th, 128th, 129th, 130th, 131st, 132nd, 133rd, 134th, 135th, 136th, 137th, 138th, 139th, 140th, 141st, 142nd, 143rd, 144th, 145th, 146th, 147th, 148th, 149th, 150th, 151st, 152nd, 153rd, 154th, 155th, 156th, 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sport

COUNTDOWN TO THE NATIONWIDE LEAGUE: Trevor Francis is back at the place where his illustrious career started, aiming to put Birmingham City back among the élite. Phil Shaw talked to him and, below, considers the prospects for each division



Trevor Francis has moved quickly to bring stability to Birmingham by signing senior professionals Photograph: Adam Scott

'Boy Wonder' craves a return to realism

There are three people with whom Trevor Francis will inevitably be compared in his new incarnation as manager of Birmingham City. One is his predecessor, Barry Fry. Another is Brian Little, his counterpart at neighbouring Aston Villa. The third? Trevor Francis.

Birmingham supporters over 30 go misty-eyed at the memory of the 16-year-old Franco, locks flapping on his shoulders, dispatching his fourth goal past the Bolton keeper. The "Boy Wonder" went on to amass 133 and represent England before leaving for Nottingham Forest. His brilliance burned ever more brightly in Blues folklore during the ensuing dark decade.

After an odyssey that also took him to Manchester, Genoa, Glasgow and beyond, Francis has finally come home. The hair is thinner and greying, butting a man approaching 43, and he hangs up his boots after playing at the highest level until his 40th year. For many of the faithful, however, the appointment heralded a return to the days when he ran fast and free.

St Andrew's, which he recalls heaving with 52,000 people, is largely unrecognisable from the grim, graffiti-spattered fortress he left in 1979. The Small Heath skyline is now dominated by a stadium resembling a scaled-down Old Trafford in blue and white.

To perform in this shrine of the times, Francis, the game's original £1m man, recently lavished Birmingham's first seven-figure sum on Chelsea's Paul Furlong. Bankrolling the long-overdue rebirth of the Blues is David Sullivan, the Essex-based entrepreneur who bought the ailing club three and a half years ago.

Throw in the arrival of Steve Bruce, Barry Horne, Gary Ablett and Mike Newell and it adds up to a feverish sense of anticipation as Birmingham prepare for their opening First Division fixture, at home to Crystal Palace on Sunday. But is it reasonable to expect Francis to recreate the impact he made as a player?

"No, it isn't," he said, plain-speaking as planes roared over the training ground like a full house at the Maracana. "What I would say is that when I was last here I helped the club up from the then Second Division. That's my aim again now."

There were invitations, in the pre-Sullivan era, to come back as player-manager. Francis preferred not to risk being remembered as "a has-been". Yet after a year out of the game, during which he proved himself a perceptive analyst with Sky, the opportunity he wanted came in May when Fry was booted by his own PR.

The previous incumbent had a fetish for mid-price forwards. Many of those who passed through the revolving door shared his Barnet background. Francis prefers Premiership pedigree. He intends to prune, but said: "I'm all for using squads - you have to nowadays - but certainly you need a bit more stability."

His first plume landed the defender who led Manchester United to three championships. "When you sign Steve Bruce you don't just get a footballer but the

best captain in the country. How can you put a price on his leadership qualities? It also helped to get other players in."

For all the owner's fan-like impatience, Francis plays down suggestions that he has two years to deliver promotion. "No target's been set," he said. "We're like Wolves in that there's great expectancy, but let's be realistic. We came 15th last season so there's a lot of work needed to make the top three."

It is safe, though, to assume that consolidation is not on the agenda. The assessment of personnel, tactics and formations by Francis and his assistant, Mick Mills, has been condensed even by pre-season standards. "One thing you've never got in management is time - you're always fighting it."

The pressure on him has been intensified, if only in the media's eyes, by Little's success at Villa. They once faced each other in a Youth Cup derby that drew 40,000 to two games. Today, talk of friendly rivalry draws a wry smile from Francis.

"It used to be Barry Fry and Ron Atkinson in the city," he mused. "Now you've got complete opposites in Brian and myself, quiet, private people. He's a friend and he's done an unbelievable job. But we can be as big as them. Villa will always have the tradition, and they've got more support outside the city."

"Within Birmingham we're at least their equals. When the club were almost finished a few

years ago, the potential never changed. The crowds were there if the product was right."

As Blues lurch between the middle divisions, Francis was cutting his managerial teeth in controversial fashion. At Queen's Park Rangers, he fined Martin Allen for attending the birth of his first child rather than play in a match.

"I was accused of being too tough. The week before I was supposed to be too soft. I just did my own thing and tried not to pay too much attention to what people said. A big problem is that people don't know me because I'm a private person. So they start inventing and assuming things."

"I look back on the Martin Allen episode as very unfortunate. Whatever I do in my managerial career, people will always bring that up. In the interests of balance, it should be stressed that Francis' record at Sheffield Wednesday does better for Birmingham: third place in the top flight, two Wembley finals and two seventh places before a slump and the parting of ways."

One wag at a Fans' Forum asked how he would react if Sullivan's managing director, Karen Brady, went into labour. Would her husband, Paul Peschisolidi, be excused? Francis saw the joke, but intriguingly the Canadian striker was soon sold.

Cynics saw his exit as Francis laying down the boundaries over which Brady, with whom he enjoys "an excellent relationship", must not stray. Likewise his insistence on reversing the closure of Birmingham's youth scheme, and the restoration of basic press facilities. But the real power struggle, starting this weekend, is for a place in the Premiership.

Kinkladze and Sinclair hold keys to promotion

The megabucks may be in the Premiership but the presence of Georgi Kinkladze, Trevor Sinclair, Terry Venables and Steve Bruce means the First Division is hardly bereft of bankable names. To counterbalance a lack of quality in depth, it also promises the fiercest competition in all four sections.

Going into the final third of last season a handful of points separated the sides in play-off contention from those fighting relegation. If standards are even, however, resources are not, although those with no benefactor can take heart from the

promotion of Derby and Sunderland, canny spenders both.

Leicester's instant return to the land of milk and money, allied to Crystal Palace's near miss, also indicates that clubs dropping from the Premiership retain a critical edge. Manchester City and Queen's Park Rangers have (so far) resisted overtures from Kinkladze and Sinclair. If they stay - which will depend on a positive start - both should be near the summit.

Bolton's prospects look less bright, especially since Sasa Curcic has now signed for Aston Villa. Their followers, like

City's, will have noted Bruce Ritchie's availability with interest.

Buying experience for the short-term objective of getting up is a blueprint established by Leeds and Blackburn, who duly dispensed with the likes of Vinile Jones and David Speedie once up, Birmingham may not expect more than a season or two from Steve Bruce, but he should be hugely influential. Alan Shearer's best foil, Mike Newell, could be a snip at £775,000 alongside the £1.5m Paul Furlong.

Wolves' woes last winter prove that it is not simply a matter

of throwing money at the market. Mark McGhee's honeymoon with a restless support will be over if his surprisingly low-key close-season recruits - Keith Curle and Iwan Roberts to partner Dean Richards and Steve Bull in the spine of the team - do not produce results.

Sheffield United's revival following the signing of Howard Kendall's rehabilitation and of boardroom ambition. Nigel Spackman, a player-assistant manager, and

the Belarus striker Yevgen Kachuro are the major additions to a squad already equipped for the higher reaches.

As for Dave Bassett's new charges, Palace, "all they have to do is recapture the consistency he instilled during their spring surge. Much depends on finding someone good enough to fill Nigel Maryn's shoes - the Simon Tracey deal flourished yesterday - and on Ray Houghton's enduring relish for the fray."

Norwich, with Mike Walker restored, should be a threat to the rest of the league. Spencer Frio's defection to Leicester will not be

seen as a continuation of Robert Chase's selling policy if it means looking on to Darren Eadie. The scenario at Portsmouth has echoes of the hostility to Chase and Venables may yet be tempted elsewhere if fresh capital is not forthcoming.

Charlton and Huddersfield, having lost Lee Bowyer and Andy Booth, may have to settle for respectability. West Bromwich and Swindon could be better dark horses. Albion followed the cult capture of Richard Snodgrass by freeing the purse strings for Alan Buckley, while Steve McMahon is too

ruthless to rest on the laurels of Swindon's Second Division title.

Neighbouring Reading and Oxford may toil, along with Oldham, Southend and the Potteries clubs. Port Vale's FA Cup exploits were a fine advertisement for flair on a shoestring, but John Rudge can not defy straitened circumstances indefinitely. Lou Macari deserved an award for taking Stoke to fourth place after minimal outlay. Key players have gone, and Mike Sheron and Larus Sigurdsson could follow to ease debts, so a repeat would be a real leaves-and-fishes job.



Steve Bruce is hoping to help Birmingham go up

Heath's mentor becomes rival

During a brief, unproductive stint as an Aston Villa player, Adrian Heath came to admire Graham Taylor's man-management style and thoroughness. The respect survived Taylor's travels with England, and circumstances have now conspired to make them rivals for promotion.

As Burnley's player-manager, the 35-year-old Heath is balancing a desire to be his own man with lessons absorbed from the likes of Howard Kendall and Taylor. The latter, who took up his first club appointment nearly 24 years ago, is back at Watford as general manager, striving at 51 to recreate the rise which once made them runners-up behind Liverpool.

Each took up his post in the middle of a relegation tussle this year. Heath won his, Burnley gaining some impressive results against the promotion pack.

Taylor, after taking Watford's apparently forlorn fight to the final fixture, ran out of time.

Heath has since brought over a Portuguese Under-21 striker, Bambo. A fee of £65,000 saw Damien Matthew swap Crystal Palace for Turf Moor, though the master stroke may have been to persuade Vince Overson and Nigel O'Leary to move free from Stoke.

Taylor, abetted by Kenny Jackett, has added Wimbledon's Steve Tibboys and the Sunderland keeper Alec Chamberlain. Perhaps more significantly, Watford repelled Wolves' interest in David Connolly, the teenager whose two hat-tricks last spring led to Republic of Ireland caps. A good start and Elton John might even fund a few transfers

amid the tantrums and tiaras. Millwall also look ready to revive after relegation. Jimmy Nicholl has dispensed with his Russian misfits and spent £1.5m in the market for known best. Steve Crawford, his chief striker at Raith, won a Scotland cap last year, while Nicholl once described the defender David Sinclair as "so hard he has tattoos on his teeth".

Barry Fry has suffered demotion too, though his knowledge of the lower divisions should be more useful to Peterborough than it was to Birmingham. The coup in acquiring Martin O'Connor from Walsall showed that Fry sees the need for quality as well as quantity. Crew's Dario Gradi is Fry's transfer antithesis. The home-grown potential of Gareth Whalley, Mark Rivers, Francis Tierney and Danny Murphy may have to

be fulfilled elsewhere, however, unless he finds a happy medium between being required watching and sustaining a challenge.

Of the promoted clubs, Preston have the momentum and money to pick up where they left off. Plymouth should flourish under Neil Warnock; and the meanness defence in history ought to sustain Gillingham. Alan Smith's Wycombe could be useful long shots, but Blackpool may need longer to recover from blinding promotion and sacking Sam Allardyce in favour of the unproven Gary Megson.

The Bristol clubs are again in transition, with Rovers moving to the city's rugby union club under Ian Holloway's player-manager. Mere survival would nevertheless be a disappointment. For Luton, Bury, Shrewsbury, Rotherham and York, it may be the best they can hope for.

Wigan given hope by Whelan

Wigan and Wembley have been virtually twinned during the Nineties, with all the lukes and cash going to the Lancashire town's rugby league giants. If Dave Whelan has his way, which he usually does, this will be the season Wigan Athletic fight back.

Cheered on by a budding businessman called Jack Walker, Whelan played for Blackburn in the 1960 FA Cup final - but the team lost and he broke his leg that day. He later resurfaced in Wigan, supporting the 13-a-side code and building up a chain of sports shops.

Happily for the round-ball minority, the multi-millionaire's interest in football was rekindled. Whelan bought the ailing Latics and, like some apprentice Uncle Jack, gave notice of his ambitions by signing three Spaniards a year ago. Roberto Martinez, Isidro

Diaz and Jesus Seba - "Los tres Amigos" - coped well with the culture shock of cold nights at Hartlepool and Mansfield. Not well enough, though, to keep Graham Barrow in the manager's job, his autumn replacement by John Deehan revealing the owner's restlessness for progress.

Wigan missed the play-offs by two points, but look equipped to make sure this time. Deehan recruited Kevin Sharp, an English youth contemporary of Butt, Campbell and Fowler, for £80,000 from Leeds. This summer he has added Doncaster striker Graeme Jones (£150,000) and Barnsley midfielder Charlie Bishop (£40,000).

Carlisle, whose title 15 months ago underlined the importance of financial muscle, may be

Wigan's chief rivals. Relegation was embarrassing after Michael Knighton's boasts of "Europe in 10 years", but Mervyn Day has added imaginatively (French defender Stephane Pomeau) to a squad tried and trusted at this level.

The picture of potential Northern domination is completed by Darlington. To lose one away game was extraordinary not to go up even more so. The attempt to improve at home will be undertaken with Matthew Appleby, the division's best defender having joined Barnsley. Money is so scarce at Hereford that mention of the market usually concerns cattle rather than players. A play-off place confirmed that Graham Turner's coaching and organisational skills were intact after his woes at Wolves, and they should challenge again.

Despite a tight budget, relegated Swansea show signs of responding to the ideals Jan Molloy brought from Liverpool. Northampton, for whom 11th place represented genuine progress, may draw big crowds to Swindon if they improve further, while Colchester, Chester and Scunthorpe should also be in contention.

Torquay's most important pre-season fixture was in court, where Stevenage failed to oust the bottom club. A colourful chairman, Mike Bateson, has a new management team - including best-selling author Garry Nelson - and has waged £7,000 on their landing the title. Hard-up Hull could be Conference-bound, with the similarly strapped Scarborough or potentially homeless Brighton also candidates to replace Torquay as the League's last resort.

Paul on his way to Bath

Rugby Union
DAVID LLEWELLYN

Bath are expected to announce today that they have signed Henry Paul from Wigan rugby league club on a short winter contract. The New Zealander is a centre who not only scores tries but kicks goals. He therefore presents a threat in England's centre. Jeremy Guscott, since the Bath captain, Phil de Glanville, is hardly likely to be left out.

Paul, 22, is reported to have agreed a deal with Bath worth around £100,000 for four months, the contract running from 11 September to 11 January, which coincides neatly with the proposed European Cup competition. Having committed themselves to paying something approaching £6,000 per week Bath will want their money's worth, it is highly unlikely that

Paul would be put on a rota. He could always turn out at full-back, but there is Jon Callard to consider. It would mean that Paul would miss out on the Pilkington Cup and the latter stages of the Courage League programme.

But there could be a hitch. Paul, together with Vagis Tsigamala and Gary Connolly is challenging a move by the Rugby Football League to bar their short-term moves into union. Tsigamala and Connolly are set for Wasps and Harlequins respectively, but the League's chief executive, Maurice Lindsay, has told clubs that they must seek the governing body's permission before agreeing to cross-code transfers.

However, according to Wigan, the contract has been signed. The reason for the short-term nature of the deal is because Wigan are scheduled to go on a tour of New Zealand in late January.

There is also every likelihood that Bath will announce the signing of a scrum-half. Having missed out on Kyran Bracken, of Saracens, and Cardiff's Robert Howley, they are thought to be interested in Argentina's Augustin Pichot, named yesterday in the Barbarians team to play Wales in Cardiff next weekend. Olivier Roumat will become the first Frenchman to captain the Barbarians against an international team.

Mike Brewer, the former New Zealand captain, will assist coaching Ireland this season. Brewer, a member of the side beaten by South Africa in last year's World Cup final, joined the Dublin-based club Blackrock College at the end of last season. He is expected to help out this weekend at a five-day squad session in Limerick. Barbarians team, Digest, Page 23

Spinners bowl over Pakistan top order

Cricket

The Leicestershire spinners Matthew Brimmon and Adrian Pierson took seven wickets between them as Pakistan were bowled out for 221 in the Telford Bitter Challenge match at Grace Road yesterday.

It would have been worse for Pakistan but for a ninth-wicket stand of 79 between Mustaq Ahmed and Ata-Ur-Rehman. Mustaq finished as top scorer with 38 and Ata hit a breezy 30 before being last man out. Brimmon claimed 4 for 39 in 21 overs and Pierson took 3 for 44 off his 20 overs. By the close, Leicestershire had replied with 28 for 1, with Iain Sutherland bowled by the last ball of the day, from Mohammad Akram.

Only three of the six sides in contention at the top of the County Championship are in action today. Derbyshire, who face rivals Nottinghamshire at Derby, will be without all-rounder Colin Wells, who has a back injury, and the pace bowler Andrew Harris (side-muscle strain). Kent will again be without their England all-rounder Mark Ealham for the visit of Somerset. Ealham is still suffering from the strained rib muscle which forced him out of the reckoning for the second Test at Headingley. Trevor Ward will continue as captain.

The 23-year-old Richard Kettleborough is to replace the departed Australian Michael Bevan in the Yorkshire side for the match at Bristol, against Gloucestershire.

Ledingham leads charge

Equestrianism
GENEVIEVE MURPHY

Captain John Ledingham aims to win the Silk Cut Derby for the third time in succession (and the fourth overall) when he rides Kilbaha in this annual classic at Hickstead on Sunday. The contest carries a record British prize of £40,000, and is the climax of the four-day meeting that starts this morning.

Ledingham had intended to ride Kilbaha as part of the Irish Olympic team in Atlanta, but the gelding had a fever on the day that the horses were to fly to the United States, and he had to be left behind. Having missed the Games, the 13-year-old should strip a fresh horse for Hickstead.

Three riders have won the Hickstead Derby on four occa-

sions: Harvey Smith (whose famous V-sign was made after his 1971 triumph), Ireland's Eddie Macken (who gained four wins in a row on the great Boomcrang) and Michael Whitaker (who had three in succession on Monsanta).

Whitaker will be the only one of the trio in possible contention for a record fifth victory. He rides two stallions, Elton and James Kernan's Touchdown, and is waiting to see how they go. Elton was placed in three classes in Dublin last week, but Whitaker has not yet competed with Touchdown. He brought the stallion back from Dublin to ride while Kernan is recovering from a broken arm. Nick Skelton, whose three consecutive Silk Cut Derby victories were initiated in 1987, is likely to be the home favourite. Skelton has missed the last two

derbies because he was without a suitable mount for the Hickstead course, but he believes that the mare Cathleen should be a worthy ride.

"Some horses take to Hickstead, and Cathleen is one of them," Skelton said. "She's very brave and scopey, she can jump big fences with ease and nothing spooks her." The mare proved that in winning the King George V Gold Cup on the Sussex course last month, so has earned the chance to tackle the ultimate Hickstead challenge.

John Whitaker will be at Valkenswaard in the Netherlands, looking for even richer pickings, while the Hickstead meeting is in progress. Having won the Pulsar Grand Prix in Monterey last year, he will earn a £390,000 bonus if he wins the same contest at the Dutch venue.

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Davies speeds off in hot pursuit of British Open title

ness of her victory in the British Open. She finished second in first, second in her first three tournaments in the United States and has consolidated their form in recent weeks. "It is all beyond my wildest dreams," she said. "Originally my goal was to keep my card." Wiebe has been so successful she has bought a house and a car in Orlando, Florida. Yesterday she went for a spin down the M1 in a more exotic form of transport, a white-knuckled passenger in Davies's Ferrari.

PARALYMPICS: British squad look to record haul of gold as Atlanta hosts another world sporting occasion

Photograph: Gary Montimore/Allsport

Lendl was asked to play in the Czech tournament by Chemloll, the sponsors, in February. It took three months to accept, he said he did so "with a very heavy heart". He will play the first two rounds with two Englishmen, Andrew Collison from Lynn and John Bickerton from Worcester. "My biggest golfing ambition is to be able to play a round without looking for a ball," said Lendl, who shot 69, two under par, and won in two practice rounds.

Jack Barry has decided on a change of stakes for Mind Games in the Group One Nunbury Stakes at York a week today. Jockey Tim Carroll will revert to the front-running style which brought the horse successive victories in the Temple Stakes at Sandown, changing the waiting tactics employed in defeat in the six-furlong July Cup at Newmarket last time. "He was too far off the pace in the Newmarket," Barry admitted. "That won't happen back over five furlongs at York—he is back up with them and if anything gives in a lead they will be going too fast."

WALL: Pre-season friendly; Ossett Town
vsley XI (7.30).
P: Weetabix Women's English Open (Wa-
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